

from the *Dead Sea Apologies to the Iniquitous* and *O Canada*, turning out important, investigative pamphlets like *The Cold War and the Income Tax* and *The Fruits of the M.I.A.* (a crucially important attack on boondoggling academicism which has yet to be published in Britain) and editing *A Prelude* and the second and third in his series of literary chronicles, *The Shores of Light* and *The Bit Between My Teeth*—this first, *Classics and Commercials*, having appeared in 1950.

Only the European panoptic scholars come near matching Wilson for learning, and for sheer range of critical occupation there is no modern man to match him, not even Croce. If *Uprate* tends to give the impression that his wonted energy now only faintly flickers, the reader needs to remind himself sharply that the mental power in question is still of an order sufficient to illuminate the average city. Seemingly without effort, Wilson dropped *A Piece of my Mind* (1957) somewhere into the middle of all this hustle and bustle, and in the chapter entitled "The Author at Sixty" announced:

I have lately been coming to feel that, as an American, I am more or less in the eighteenth century—or, at any rate, not much later than the early nineteenth. . . . I do not want any more to be bothered with the kind of contemporary conflict that I used to go out to explore. I make no attempt to keep up with the younger American writers; and I only hope to have the time to get through some of the classics I have never read. Old fogeyism is comfortably closing in.

Taking him at his word on this last point, most critics and reviewers were relieved, which was very foolish of them.

But on the first point, about feeling himself to be an eighteenth-century or nineteenth-century figure, Wilson was making a just estimate even if he meant only that he didn't drive a car and couldn't bear to pronounce the word "movies". As Alfred Kazin argued in his review of *The American Earthquake* (collected in his fine book *Contemporaries*), the men to compare Wilson with are the literary artists driven by historical imaginations—men like Carlyle.

The third thing which lightens the darkness of *Uprate* is the author's gradually revealed—and revealed only gradually—to himself—interest in a local young woman striving to better herself. Perhaps without really willing it, Wilson is telling a subtle story here: flashes and fragments are all we get. But by the

time the book is over, we are convinced that her story is the story of the book, and that the story has gone against the mood. Kazin suggested that Wilson's secret was to gaze at America with a cold eye without being cold on America. *The American Earthquake* inexorably recorded the shattering effects of industrialism and the spiritual confusion of the New Deal, but it was not a hopeless book—it responded to the period's vitality, even (while castigating it) the vitality of Henry Ford. *Uprate* very nearly is a hopeless book, and for a long while we suspect that Wilson has gone cold on America. But finally we see that he hasn't, quite: as the girl Mary works to establish herself in a way that her European origins would probably not have allowed, the American adventure haltingly begins all over again, at the eleventh hour and in the fifty-ninth minute.

Against the Stygian background of the book's accumulated imagery it is not much hope to offer, but it is not nothing, and Wilson was never in the consolation business anyway. Which leaves us—as we shelve *Uprate* beside *A Prelude* and prudently leave room for the books dealing with the thirty uncovered years between them—with the question of what business Wilson has been in.

Surviving, but as what?

What does Wilson's effort amount to? Is there an atom of truth in his dispirited suggestion that his books have dated? Supposing—as seems likely—that Wilson belongs with the great, copious critical minds like Saintsbury, Sainte-Beuve, Croce, Taine: is he doomed to survive like them only as an emblem of the qualities a mind can have, Saintsbury for gusto, Sainte-Beuve for diligence, Croce for rigour, Taine for drama? Wilson makes Van Wyck Brooks's output look normal, Eliot's look small, Empson's, Trilling's and Leavis's look farmed. Just how is all this avoidances to be moved forward? We need to decide whether critical work which has plainly done so much to influence its time vanishes with its time or continues. To continue, it must have done something beyond maintaining standards or correcting taste, important as those functions are; it must have embodied, not just recommended, a permanent literary value. And we do not have to re-read much of Wilson's criticism—although it would be a year of perfect pleasure

to re-read all of it—to see that it does embody a value, and embodies it in a way and to a degree that no other corpus of twentieth-century work has approached. But this value, so easily sensed, is very difficult to define, since it must perforce reside in whatever is left after opposing high estimations of Wilson have cancelled each other out. Lionel Trilling (in "Edmund Wilson: A Background Glance" collected in *A Gathering of Fugitives*) says that an interest in ideas is the very essence of Wilson's criticism. Alfred Kazin, on the other hand, says that ideas are things Wilson is not at home with. If both these men admire the same thing in Wilson, what is it?

The answer is that Wilson has a mental style—a mental style which reveals itself in the way he writes. He is proof by nature against metaphysics of any kind (sometimes to the damaging extent that he cannot grasp why men should bother to hold to them), and this characteristic gives his work great clarity. He never has to strive towards perspicuity, since he is never tempted even momentarily to abandon it. And in more than fifty years of activity he has put up such a consistent show of knowing what he means—and of writing it down so that it may be readily understood—that he has invited underestimation. The most difficult escape Houdini ever made was from a wet sheet, but since he was in the business of doing difficult-looking things he had to abandon this trick, because to the public it seemed easy. What Wilson was doing was never easy, but he had the good manners to make it look that way. If he could only have managed to dream up an objective correlative, or a few types of ambiguity, or if he had found it opportune to start lamenting the loss of an organic society, he would be much more fashionable now than he is. But we can search his work from end to end without finding any such conversation-piece. What we do find is a closely argued dramatic narrative in which good judgment and misjudgment both stand out plainly. The dangerous excitement of a tentatively formulated concept is absent from his work, and for most of us this is an excitement that is hard to forgo: the twentieth century has given us a palate for such pepper.

But there is another, more durable excitement which Wilson's entire body of work serves to define. There is a clue to it in *Uprate*. In the passage where Wilson discusses the different courses taken by Eliot and Van Wyck Brooks:

They were at Harvard at the same time. Brooks of the class of 1909, Eliot of 1910, and both, as was natural then, went, after college, to England. Eliot took root there, but Brooks said that, during the months he spent in England, he found himself preoccupied with American subjects. This difference marks the watershed in the early nineteenth-century American literary life. Eliot stays in England, which is for him still the motherland of literature in English, and becomes a European; Brooks returns to the United States and devotes himself to American writing, at the expense of what has been written of an American internationalism: Brooks, as a spokesman of the twenties, the beginnings of the sometimes all too conscious American literary self-glorification which is part of our American imperialism.

As it happened, Wilson was to go on to cover American subjects with all Brooks's thoroughness and more; and to parallel Eliot's internationalism while yet holding to the tacit belief that the American achievement could well be crucial in the continuity of that internationalism; and to combine these two elements with a total authority of preparation and statement. For that preparation, he had the brilliant education available in pre-war Princeton to a young man ready to grasp it. For that statement, he was obliged to evolve a style which would make his comprehensive seriousness unmistakable in every line. Out of these two things came the solid achievement of judgments based on unarguable knowledge ably supplied to meet an historical demand. From the beginning, Wilson was a necessary writer, a chosen man. And it is this feeling of watching a man proving himself equal to an inconceivably important task—explaining the world to America and explaining America to itself—which provides the constant excitement of Wilson's work.

The great show-off style

Commanding this kind of excellence his prose needed no other. Wilson grew out of the great show-off period of American style. He could not have proceeded without the trail-blazing, first performed by Mencken and Nathan, but he was fundamentally different from them in not feeling bound to over-write.

Wilson's style adopted the Menckens-Nathans toughness but eschewed the belligerence—throwing no punches. It simply put its points and waited for intelligent men to agree. It assumed that intelligence could be a unifying factor rather than a divisive

one. In the following passage from "The Critic Who Does Not Exist" written in 1928 and later collected in *The Shores of Light* this point is made explicitly:

What we lack, then, in the United States, is not writers or even literary persons, but simply serious literary criticism. . . . Brooks, Mumford and Joseph W. Kitchin, though they set forth their ideas, do not occupy themselves with the art or ideas of the writers whom they deal. Each of these great amounts of criticism to justify or explain what is doing, but it may, I think, be said in general that they do not do it with one another's opinions do not really circulate, in spite of our flood of literary journals, to what extent the literary atmosphere is a non-conductor of criticism. What actually happens, our literary world, is that each leader of leaders is allowed to influence his disciples, either ignoring all the existence only of the criticism of the literary snobs. H. L. Mencken and T. S. Eliot present themselves, as I have said, from the critical point of view, as most formidable figures on the scene. Yet Mencken's discussion of his rival has, so far as my memory goes, been confined to an inclusion of one of those lists of idiotic crazes in which the *Mercury* once included also the recital of jokes and paper-bag cookery. . . . Eliot, established in London, does not, of course, consider himself under the necessity of dealing with Mencken at all. . . . Van Wyck Brooks, in spite of considerable bawling, never been induced to defend his position (though Kitchin has recently set up some challenges). And the men who have been belaboured by the men of several different camps, making any attempt to strike back, are furthermore, seems unfortunately, some of our most important writers: Sherwood Anderson and Eugene O'Neill, for example—should work, it is apparently do, in almost complete intellectual isolation, receiving from outside but little intelligent criticism.

Wilson's innovation was to be to the American intelligentsia as to the European one, speaking a common language. "For American language," he wrote in his essay, "which all French writers, matter how divergent their opinions, always possess in common: the language of criticism." That was the ideal, and by behaving as if he had already come about, he did a deal to bring it into existence. A neutral, dignified tone of his

critical here: it implied that he was not needed for an overdone personality, since writer and reader were on a level and understood one another. As Lionel Trilling has convincingly argued, Wilson's years in an editorial chair for the *New Republic* were a big help in this tone right, he was in the middle of the pieces in *The New Republic* before a self-defining audience of intelligent men, all of whom were capable of appreciating that Wilson should circulate.

The chronicle of 1920s

The literary chronicles, especially *The Shores of Light*, are commonly read about Wilson's more intelligent books, although it seems likely that the people doing the valuing do not correctly judge the importance of the latter, the evaluation of the former seems just at first glance. As has often been pointed out, there is nothing in criticism to the thrill of hearing Wilson produce the first descriptions and definitions of the strong new Americanism that was coming up in the 1920s. The first essays on Fitzgerald and Hemingway will always stand out as the perfect objects for any literary critic's envy and respect. But again we must remember to look at the things which Wilson was trying to nourish ourselves under the necessity of dealing with Mencken at all. . . . Van Wyck Brooks, in spite of considerable bawling, never been induced to defend his position (though Kitchin has recently set up some challenges). And the men who have been belaboured by the men of several different camps, making any attempt to strike back, are furthermore, seems unfortunately, some of our most important writers: Sherwood Anderson and Eugene O'Neill, for example—should work, it is apparently do, in almost complete intellectual isolation, receiving from outside but little intelligent criticism.

A certain demonstration of Wilson's integrity in this regard is his willingness to assess minor and ancillary literature about which no general opinion has previously been formed. *The Shores of Recognition* and *Patriotic Gore* are natural cul-de-sacs of Wilson's early drive to mine and assaying in territory where nobody else had even staked out a memory: he never at first believed that the historic texts by which writings are foredoomed should go unexamined or be treated irreversibly. Remembering one of the many duties the literary chronicles perform: not so spectacularly as discovering, but equally important, for Wilson's self-imposed task of circulating opinions on an intelligent community (a community whose existence depends on a process for its whole existence, all these duties needed to be regularly carried out, and it is a triumph of the literary chronicles that they were carried out in so adroit a way.

Wilson's all these things are held in the true nature of the literary chronicles cannot be seen, even by the man who values them above the rest of Wilson's work. In *The Shores of Light* it is necessary to appreciate not only "F. Scott Fitzgerald" and "The Waste Land" but also pieces like "The Literary Consequences of the Crash" and "The United States" and "Prize-Winning Verse". In *Classics and Commercials* we need to cherish not only the stand-out hatchet-jobs like "The Cars Who Killed Roger Traynor" and "Tales of the Marvellous and the Ridiculous" but also the tedious labour of weighing up the merits of even when Wilson went into essays like "Van Wyck Brooks on the Civil War" and "The Literary Period". And unless we can do this, the notion that picking out Wilson's only true call to life, we will have no hope of doing a true estimation of *The Bit Between My Teeth*—a book which is the full vigour of Wilson's mind in its last piece in it. "The Correspondence" and "The Correspondence" are good examples of what Wilson was doing by bringing a literary chronicle to the fore.

"Stude" got the whole Stude revival into focus and incisively set the limits for its expansion.

The literary chronicles would have been more than enough by themselves to establish Wilson's pre-eminence: to a high degree they have that sense of the drama of creativity which Taine had been able to capture and exploit. If people are going to read only some of Wilson instead of all of him, then the chronicles are what they should read. But it is one thing to say this, and another to accept the assumption distressingly widespread in recent years that *Axel's Castle* and *The Wound and the Bow* and *The Triple Thinkers* have some way done the work they had to do and may be discarded, like used-up boosters. There is not much doubt about how such an idea gained currency, books of long essays being so much harder to read than books of short ones. But there is no reason for anyone who has actually read and understood a book like *Axel's Castle* to go along with such a slovenly notion. When, in the Yeats chapter of that book, Wilson compared the Yeats of 1931 to the Dante who was able "to sustain a grand manner through sheer intensity without rhetorical heightening", he was writing permanent criticism, criticism which can't be superseded, certainly not by pundits who are boning up their Dante from a parallel text instead of learning it the hard way from a teacher like Christian Gauss. It is barbarism of a peculiarly academic kind to suppose that truths of this order—no insights, explanations, or glosses, but truths—can be appropriated to a data-bank or dismissed as obsolete. A Dantesque "epigrammatic bitterness" is precisely the quality to see in the mature Yeats, and in 1931, before the last poems were written, it was virtually present to be able to see it, since that quality had not yet reached its full concentration.

Wilson paid heavy penalties for being plain—or rather we paid heavy penalties for not seeing the force of his plainness. In the Eliot chapter of *Axel's Castle* he said something about Eliot that forty years of theses and learned articles have done their best to bury, something which we are only now capable of seeing as criticism rather than conversation, the intervening hubbub of academic industry having revealed itself as conversation rather than criticism:

We are always being dismayed, in our general eagerness to discover that lines among those which we had believed to represent Eliot's residuum of original invention had been taken over or adapted from other writers. . . . One would be inclined a priori to assume that all this load of erudition and literature would be enough to sink any writer, and that such a production as "The Waste Land" must be a work of second-hand inspiration. And it is true that, in reading, Eliot and Pound, we are sometimes visited by uneasy recollections of Apollinaire, in the fourth century, composing Greek and Latin macramorion and piecing together poetic nuggets out of verses from Virgil. . . . Eliot manages to be so effective precisely—in "The Waste Land"—where he might be expected to be least original—he succeeds in conveying his meaning, in communicating his emotion, in spite of all his learned or mysterious allusions, and whether we understand them or not. In this respect, there is a curious contrast between Eliot and Ezra Pound.

With Pound, Wilson was like Tailor Bankhead faced with a tricky production of Shakespeare: he wasn't afraid to announce, "There's less in this than meets the eye." With Eliot, he was bold enough to say that things were simpler than they appeared at first blush. Both these judgments were backed up by a deep learning which had nothing to fear from either man, by a self on itself, by which he knew how to set himself and by a seriousness which was not concerned with putting up a front.

The metropolitan ideal

There is no need to go on with this part of the argument. It's more merciful simply to state that Wilson's entire critical corpus will go on being read so long as men are prepared to read widely and well. His strategy of using magazines—first *The New Republic*, later the *New Yorker*—as shipyards in which to assemble books

was triumphantly successful. He is the ideal of the metropolitan critic, who understood from the beginning that the intelligence of the metropolis is in a certain relation to the intelligence of the academy, and went on understanding this even when the intelligence of the academy ceased to understand its relation to the intelligence of the metropolis. When Wilson called the Modern Language Association to order, he performed the most important academic act of the postwar years—the reminder the scholars that their duty was to literature.

For Wilson literature has always been an international community, with a comprehensible politics of its own. He learnt languages not just out of passionate curiosity but out of quasi-political purpose, becoming acquainted with whole literatures in the same way that a man who carries an international passport proves himself a part of the main. As late as the mid-1950s Wilson was apologizing for not having done enough in this line: he has always been a trifle guilty about failing to get interested in Portuguese and Spanish. But to a chaste extent he had already made himself the universal literatus, and in the later decades of his life he found him becoming increasingly conscious that this is his major role—if he has any significance in the realm of action, then this is it. Modesty has never been among Wilson's characteristics, but a certain diffidence does creep in, of which the quietism and resignation of *Uprate* are the logical culmination. The central paradox of Wilson remains unresolved: he has put himself above the battle, inhabiting an Empyrean of knowledge by now fundamentally divorced from an unworkable world. The paradox was vicious from the beginning, becoming more and more so as modern history unfolded in front of him. Wilson was a born internationalist in literature and a born isolationist in politics, and there is a constant tension between the achieved serenity of his literary judgment and the threatening complexity of his self-consciousness as an American.

A patrician individualist by nature, Wilson was automatically debarré from running with the pack. His radicalism in the 1920s and 1930s had a decisive qualitative difference from any Marxist analyses currently available: it was elitist, harking back to the informed democracy of the American past, and therefore on a richer historical base than the hastily imported European doctrines which hemmed his contemporaries. Wilson's reports on Detroit are as devastating as Marx on the working day, but the intensity is the only connexion. Wilson was revolted by industrialism's depredations—if the ecological lobby ever wants to put a bible together, there are sections of *The American Earthquake* which could go straight into Revelations—but the revulsion was just as much on behalf of what America had previously been as on behalf of what it inevitably became. Marxism is future-directed metaphysics: Wilson's thought was bent towards the literary recovery of the estimable past.

The staunch isolationist

Making no commitment to communism, Wilson was never compelled to scramble away from it, and he maintained his dignity throughout the 1930s. By 1940 he had completed his analysis of the revolutionary tradition in Europe and published it as *To the Finland Station*. In the final paragraph of that book he declared it unlikely that the Marxist creeds would be able to bring about

a society in which the superior development of some is not paid for by the exploitation of others—a society which will be homogeneous and co-operative as our commercial society is not, and directed, to the best of their ability, by the conscious creative minds of its members.

America went to war again, and again Wilson was isolated: as with the First World War, so with the Second, he saw no point in America becoming involved. He was still explaining such phenomena by market pressures and the devious cunning of

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Big Business - it was a Fabian position, never much altered since he first picked it up from Leonard Woolf. Wilson has difficulty in understanding how irrational forces can be so potent. In *Europe without Hierarchy* and *A Piece of my Mind* he came close to holding the Europeans collectively responsible for pulling their own houses down in ruins about their heads. It was the high point of his isolationism, further reinforced by a commitment to the American past amounting to visionary fervour. In his admiration for Lincoln we find Wilson getting very near the mysticism he spent a lifetime scrupulously avoiding. Finally he found an historical

base solid-seeming enough to justify the relieved rediscovery of a Platonic Guardian class. "To simplify," he wrote in *A Piece of my Mind* (1957),

one can say that, on the one hand, you find in the United States the people who are constantly aware... that, beyond their opportunities for money-making, they have a stake in the success of our system, that they share the responsibility to carry on its institutions, to find provision for its new point of view, to give it dignity, to make it work; and, on the other hand, the people who are merely concerned with making a living or a fortune, with practising some profession or mastering some technical skill, as they would in any other country, and

who lack, or do not possess to quite the same degree the sense of America's role.

That was as far as he got: the Republic he loved began to be overwhelmed by the Democracy he had never been sure about, and in the new reality of the 1960s he found himself taxed but unrepresented.

In *Upland Wilson* is faced with the ruins of the American Dream, and appears to be forgetting what we are bound to remember: that the fragments can be built with and that this fact is in some measure due to him. The intellectual community which is now fighting for the Republic against

its own debilitating tumours was a considerable extent his personal creation. That Americans of good will, in the midst of wearying political confusion, can yet be so confident of their nation's creativity, again in a large part due to him. Christian Gauss was to Wilson, master to pupil—Wilson is to a body: nobody can see. He doubts the continuity he helped define. But, beyond the help of vision now limiting itself to C. and Talcottville, there are always be young men coming up who will find his achievement a light. He is one of the great men of letters in our century.

Mr Forbes's telling, the film is less a world of glamour than of company politics and ineffectiveness. His hero, Dick James, is a director (not, we are told, a subtly disguised self-portrait) who spends much of the book wondering whether the internecine politics of directorial infighting might spread to him and his going to film as efforts are made to save the accountants. To an extent, though, film-making is the peg on which human drama is hung. Warren is married to an actress, like him, spends much of her life on location or at the set, and his marriage is wearing thin enough. It is today ("without columns," his title puts it), presiding over the mythology of the past while he ignores its history; and in that he has succeeded remarkably well. He writes with insight and sympathy, and even a certain detachment. To some aspects of the landscape, for example, the hospitality—he succeeds, every foreigner does. As for the politics, even in debunking it he recognizes its force: "ethnic truth" something different from and more powerful than merely objective. By inventing the archetypal character of "Supergreek," Mr Holden makes a valuable contribution to myth-making. For that the Greeks will be in his debt.

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Patrick Skene Catling: Harp. £1.75.

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Mr Jarman is a businessman, out-wardly respectable and unexceptionable, who nurtures beneath his house a dark and sinister world. He also possesses an irrepressible tendency to layer of added philosophy and grandiloquence: a neat and a little grosser acts at a distance, appearing to analyse them; but, incidentally, provides Mr Jarman with a unique, apt and familiar voice for the madman he is to hunt on like the madman he is.

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A surrogate, in sex-lab parlance, is someone who provides what your usual partner can't (i.e. a break from your usual partner) thereby restoring to full vigour what age had withered

and the years made limp. Female surrogates, it appears, are a commonplace, male surrogates a rarity. For reasons too obvious to relate, some members of a militant faction of Women's Lib blackmail male chauvinist reporter John Goodspeed into infiltrating a research centre where their sisters go brainless in the service of science rather than social advance in order to liberate hapless men from the iron grip of impotence.

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Dr Manning and Father O'Halloran, whose zeal has long since given way to making the best of a bad job. Neither pygmies nor Europeans are quite as awe-stricken and gladdened as Murgatread, though, when he lays eyes on the products of the clasp cottage industry—golden phallos of superb craftsmanship and considerable avoidpuls. Born of a race which sought Manhattan from the Indians for a ribbon, a mirror, and thirty pieces of silver, Murgatread is not slow to detect the heady scent of profit in the air; with the help of a radio and a co-operative corporation, he is soon in possession of a portable smutty and unlimited supplies of sheet metal, the purpose being to manufacture swords and suits of armour like those he knocked together from the remains of his plane and which so delighted the chief when gawgaws failed to impress.

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Camera angles

FORBES:
A Distant Laughter
Collins. £1.80.

As no surprise to learn that Mr Forbes's novel is about the film industry. It will not do, though, to compare—as his publishers insist—do—between Mr Forbes and Scott Fitzgerald, for one is unfair to Scott Fitzgerald, and what is more important is that Mr Forbes is a writer not so great as he is a filmmaker. He is a filmmaker who needs camouflage with his own names.

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Enigmatic to the last, Skate disappears without trace after the anti-church has begun to be harassed by the police who suspect subversive goings-on. Disappearing into thin air certainly comes close to being a Very Special Act, but by the time he gets around to performing it, raw (there's a metaphor in that, you can be sure), and while his draughty backwoods shack shields

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The vanguard of the Modern Movement

L. BRION-GUERRY (ed.):
L'Année 1913
Les formes esthétiques de l'œuvre
d'art à la veille de la première guerre
mondiale.

Volume 1: 950pp. Volume 2:
pp 952-1291.
Paris: Klincksieck, 1969fr the set.

MARCELIN PLEYNET:
L'Enseignement de la peinture
221pp. Paris: Seuil, 25fr.

WERNER HAFMANN and others:
Abstract Art Since 1945
Translated by Cyril J. Hay-Shaw and
others.

301pp plus 304 plates.
J. P. HODIN and others:
Figurative Art Since 1945

Translated by Lyon Benzinra and
others.
332pp including 322 plates.
Thames and Hudson, £8.50 each.

In the first year of the twentieth century, W. B. Yeats affirmed that "almost certainly no great art, outside England... has arisen without a great criticism, for its herald or its interpreter and protector". His remark sets the stage for the modernist enterprise, or at least for that vanguard of the Modern Movement which we identify by the slightly deprecatory title of "Little Magazines". The fact that such magazines proliferated, and served as a battleground for the forces of traditionalism and modernism, can be seen as an indispensable accessory to the prodigious development of all the arts in the period from 1910 to 1930.

In spite of their evident importance, the "Little Magazines" have only recently begun to receive their due share of attention. This is in part because (before the spate of reprints) they were notoriously difficult to locate, but also because, in England at any rate, there is little more sympathy today than there was in Yeats's time for the notion of the critic as herald. Works of art and literature are easily illustrated or reprinted, but the criticism which provided their original context is assumed to be merely secondary and therefore less worthy of discussion. It is for this reason that the second volume of *L'Année 1913*, which deals predominantly with the "Reviews internationales" of the previous period, may be regarded as of particular value. This is not to deny the decision to consider these two collections as symptomatic of a general state of affairs is quite justifiable. They derive ultimately from the editorial and critical expertise built up by the Brussels art magazine *Quadrant*, over the period between 1936 and 1966. Prefatory remarks by Jean Leymarie invoke the spectacle of an international fraternity of art critics, meeting periodically "at the great art events in Venice, in Kassel and in Sao Paulo" and otherwise engaged in carrying on the "battle" for modern art in their respective countries. The list of contributors mustered for this final enterprise is by any account an impressive one, including such well known figures as Werner Haftmann, Klio Dorfler, Hans Jaffé, Lucy Lippard, J. P. Hodin, Lawrence Alloway and Pierre Restany.

In view of the eminence of the contributors, it is worth looking with some attention at the reasons for the decidedly unsatisfactory nature of the decision to stress first of all that the decision to consider these two collections as symptomatic of a general state of affairs is quite justifiable. They derive ultimately from the editorial and critical expertise built up by the Brussels art magazine *Quadrant*, over the period between 1936 and 1966. Prefatory remarks by Jean Leymarie invoke the spectacle of an international fraternity of art critics, meeting periodically "at the great art events in Venice, in Kassel and in Sao Paulo" and otherwise engaged in carrying on the "battle" for modern art in their respective countries. The list of contributors mustered for this final enterprise is by any account an impressive one, including such well known figures as Werner Haftmann, Klio Dorfler, Hans Jaffé, Lucy Lippard, J. P. Hodin, Lawrence Alloway and Pierre Restany.

the final product. In part this is a question of editorial control, or rather of the complete absence of any discernible editorial intervention. This is most clearly evident in the cases of overlap and omission which proliferate. The role of such painters as Wols and Fautrier in the development of postwar gestural painting in Europe is certainly worth detailed consideration. But it scarcely bears the repetition which it receives. By contrast, there can scarcely be a more devastating proof of the blind spot occupied by Charles Biederman in the development of postwar art than the fact that he is not mentioned even parenthetically by any contributor. British artists influenced by Biederman, such as Kenneth and Mary Martin and Anthony Hill, share the weight of this prohibition, and the only concession to the tradition of postwar constructive art in Britain is the occasional conscience-stricken reference to Victor Pasmore, as in Umberto Apollonio's rhetorical question: "And why not mention Victor Pasmore, who is certainly a front-ranking artist?"

These particular faults of omission and repetition are compounded by the generally low standard of critical discourse, which, with a few honourable exceptions, tends to be either obscure to the point of fatuity or intolerably strident. What can we make of a series of judgments like the following?

Hervé Téliénague, a more ardent spirit, did in fact move in that direction, and was unafraid of the influence of advertising techniques in the search for an "objective" style, like that of *Confidence*, 1965. James Rosenquist is

thought to owe something to Magritte. More original is the Swede, Oyvind Fahlström, who introduced the element of chance, using magnetic techniques, in the disposition of the elements of his mobile pictures. All sense of order and explicitness is sacrificed to the desperate enterprise of stringing together as many names as possible in the shortest possible space. More attractive and more illuminating by far is the unashamedly selective and cheerfully egocentric approach of Pierre Restany, whose section on "The New Realism" has the virtues as well as the vices of the evangelist. Unfortunately the evangelical tone is liable to degenerate into the stridency of Alain Jouffroy. "Although I tried to demonstrate the necessity of its abolition, art has continued to function in the galleries, museums and reviews."

M. Jouffroy's ritual invocation of the names of Michel Foucault and Chomsky serves only to remind us of the lack of any serious attempt by the critics represented to integrate the disciplines of linguistics and semiology into their discourse, just as Francine C. Legrand's contribution on "The Sign and the 'Open Form'" makes us glaringly aware of the futility of using the term "sign" without any attempt at strict definition. Both critics make the intellectual rigour of Marcelin Pleynet's *L'Enseignement de la peinture* seem doubly admirable. In 1969, Jean-Louis Schefer published in his *Sémiologie du tableau* (reviewed here on June 11, 1970) what is still the most exhaustive demonstration of semiological

method applied to a classical work of art. Marcelin Pleynet, another disciple of the French *l'art pour l'art* vice for the art of the present century, rests not on one painting, but on the numerous insights which work of Matisse but also into the Mondrian and more recent artists can hardly be developed here. An essential point is that his entire stance derives from a particularly torrid view of the genesis of Modernism. That "coupeure épistémologique" which he has diagnosed in terms in the work of Lautréamont, for the visual artist in the work of Cézanne, and it is the example of Cézanne which engenders the relevant contradictions between purely formal departure of Cubists and the "coupeure épistémologique" accepted by Duchamp and the Dada movement. M. Pleynet's refusal to recognize Cézanne's primordial importance:

Breton ouvre ainsi incontestablement la voie à un miroitement avant tout dont la naïve référence à la sociologie n'a pas manqué de produire des séquences françaises (qui) ont saisi (Nouveau-réalisme, Pop-art, pauvre, Art conceptuel, etc.).

M. Pleynet's cleaning of the Augean stables is perhaps rather strenuous. But it is difficult to see the dreary catalogue of great these movements in the two volumes previously without feeling that for the sanity of critical discourse any rate, such a cleaning may overdue.

while heads of Italian states, including the pope, came to keep meetings in classical tradition, what wanted here, of course, is a collection of the passages in classical authorities (including Herodotus, Elder Pliny and Strabo) that refer to African animals, and an examination of how this information came to be found and was assimilated in Renaissance Italy, above all humanists, patrons and artists. Miss Lloyd's study is illustrated with ninety-three well-chosen black and white plates, produced by set printing which are good enough reproductions of drawings, engravings and medallions, to be somewhat indistinct in the case of paintings. Moreover the captions do not provide precise locations. It notes to the text are together at the end of each page, instead of at the foot of each page; they are drastically pruned, for a good deal of information is not documented while what there is very largely derives from secondary sources. The incomplete bibliography is not useful, even though the best of a work is frequently not provided, and Barthelemy should be added. Finally, there is a useful index.

The first edition of Frank Lloyd Wright's *Genius and the Machine* published in 1949, was obviously an account of Wright's association with Louis Sullivan—his first master—a tribute to his genius; in fact it is much more an exposition of Wright's own beliefs and an essay in his justification presented in his inflated language—a quality which says (of Sullivan and Wright) "Through the vision of the new world, the face of America was transformed." They were both, in their way, great men, but such a statement is nonsense.

Nineteen drawings by Sullivan and one by Wright have been added to the thirty-eight drawings by Sullivan reproduced in the original edition and the text has been enlarged and reprinted two articles by Sullivan on Wright's Imperial Hotel. There are fifty-five pages of photographs of Sullivan's architectural ornament.

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Psi in the sky?

ARTHUR KOESTLER:
The Roots of Coincidence
158pp. Hutchinson, £2.

Parapsychology, these days, is less the subject of intellectual wrangling than that Arthur Koestler makes out than a parable, with a parabolic history that once took it away from academic respectability and has now brought it back. Yet the arguments of the protagonists are as paradoxical, and their antics (like one or two of Mr Koestler's in this book) as wild as ever.

Why else invoke, as Mr Koestler does early on, the metaphor of the court room—with parapsychology in the dock—and then defend it with evidence that is, especially before the bench of science, inadmissible? It is by poor design, not coincidence, that Mr Koestler laboriously lists by name those eminent men of science who have taken, as he puts it, an "active part" in the three wings of parapsychology—extra-sensory perception, psychokinetics, and seriality (or synchronicity).

So several of Mr Koestler's early pages have to be ruled out of court—as, unfortunately, must the last chapter. This is a postscript by Rende Haynes, a writer on psychical research whom Mr Koestler asked to add, he says, "a flavour of Yin to the austere Yang". One needs a mite of parapsychological ability to understand why he did this: Miss Haynes's contribution is written in the familiar tone of parapsychologists—full of "impressions" and "perceptions", "personal" ascription which, however "Yin" they may be, are very little else and detract from, rather than add to, the scientific aspirations that have gone immediately before.

As a brief, then, we have a legally lachrymose opening and a cerebrally soft summing-up—far from the ideal case to convince a jury; which makes it just as well that we are dealing so far only in metaphor for the pith of the book is entirely different—more tightly written, more convincing, more of the criticism that the informed reader would make, and juxtaposing psy-

chology and physics in an inventive and entertaining way. It is only the specialist reader who will notice, however, that Mr Koestler presents the parapsychologists' case better than parapsychologists themselves, though he himself has never done any experimentation. He goes straight to the point and is right, certainly, when he says that two things go in the way of a ready acceptance of parapsychology by most of us—that it goes against the familiar laws of physics, and that its nature is so quixotic and unreliable.

He makes a good job, too, of organizing his argument that much of modern physical theory—negative mass, for instance, or holes in space—is every bit as "occult" as parapsychology. He rightly points out its probabilistic nature. Nothing is wrong when he suggests that, since physics operates in this way, so could parapsychology. In fact, so long as he keeps physics and psychology in parallel, as it were, all is well. It is only when he starts to bend them towards each other that conviction—Mr Koestler's and the reader's—begins to falter. The examples he chooses are unsatisfactory. The experiments conducted by W. Grey Walter (unfortunately described as "one of Britain's most respected neurophysiologists") on the use of "will power" to turn on television sets are tangential to Mr Koestler's argument. We can accept the electric brain, even the magnetic nature of feedback—but this is all that Dr Grey Walter's experiments are about. "Will power" which seems to strike awe into Mr Koestler, here means bio-feedback—mind over matter, yes, but only in so far as the "matter" is one's own body. This has nothing to say about the parapsychological communication of dreams, the brain's influence on the growth of plants, and so on. Again, Mr Koestler gives an account of Jung's cooperation with Pauli, the physicist, in a work on *Synchronicity: an acausal connecting principle* to create an impression of the fruitfulness that can be got from psychologists and physicists working together. Yet, as Mr Koest-

ler admits, the result was both "very bold and very vague". It was "a stimulating exercise in unorthodox speculation, but at the same time sadly disappointing". That last remark could be said about much in *The Roots of Coincidence*. Mr Koestler does make one more ready to accept parapsychology, yet this is at the expense of making one suspect much of the same sleight of hand that the barrister employs, agreeing to with "law", on the direction of the judge, a comment he has just made before the jury, knowing the intended effect cannot be erased.

However, there is one considerable achievement in the book—but it has nothing directly to do with parapsychology. This is the introduction Mr Koestler gives to the theories of Adrian Dobbs. As Mr Koestler points out in a footnote, Dobbs—a Cambridge physicist who worked mainly in secret defence—was killed last year while *The Roots of Coincidence*, which draws heavily on his theories, was in preparation. Dobbs's theories, however, won't die with him—quite the opposite for, with the growing interest in, and discontent about, current theories of consciousness, the behaviourist sciences, the rationale which Dobbs's ideas give for the way special sciences—a conceivably dense and proof is particularly timely. Briefly, Dobbs proposed that time exists in two dimensions, the one we are familiar with and a second, moving through a probabilistic, not a deterministic world: as Mr Koestler puts it, "it resembles less an arrow than a wave front". Given the statistical—i.e. basically probabilistic—nature of social scientific evidence, the relevance of this theory is clear, as are some of its implications for certain topical doctrines in social science—especially deterministic ones like Skinnerism.

A critical look at the detailed applications of Dobbs's theories to the social sciences is therefore now needed: to have made them more widely known could well prove Arthur Koestler's main achievement in *The Roots of Coincidence*. So far as one can tell, it doesn't appear to have been done by design.

Is there anything new to be said in the Wilde saga? Yes, answers Rupert Croft-Cooke, in this valuable and revealing biography. Illustrated. £3.50

Make mine meaningful

YORICK ALEXANDER WILKS:
Grammar, Meaning and the Machine
Analysis of Language
198pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £3.

Yorick Alexander Wilks is basically a man who is clever with computers. He used to work at the Cambridge Language Research Unit, a miniature think-tank which has subsisted for ten years in the suburbs of the University. Since then he has found his métier in Southern California, at the Institute of Formal Studies, the Systems Development Corporation, and recently at Stanford University. Throughout his career he has operated, one suspects, in a kind of interdisciplinary or non-disciplinary limbo. Certainly, there are no signs that he has ever had strict supervision in the study of language. Nor does he himself appear to have taught regularly in a normal university department. His main contacts have been with an assortment of other people like himself.

Unfortunately this background is all too relevant to an appreciation of the book which he has written. His central problem arises from the inherent ambiguity of many words: *round*, for example, has one sense in I'll have a round of sandwiches, but another in I'll play a round of golf. We agree that this is so, but how could we programme a computer to make the same decisions? An answer would be important if, for example, we were ever to revive the notion of machine translation. Unless the dictionary ambiguities were resolved the machine would not know which words to choose in our target language. In tackling this problem Dr Wilks has undoubtedly shown practical sense and ingenuity. If a word could

have two or more senses then, he says, we must see how close they are to the other words with which it is constructed. These are to be determined within some standard form of "message": for example, *round of sandwiches* is in general a statement about "some quantity of some sort of object". If that does not suffice then the alternative "messages" must be matched with the other "messages" surrounding. Thus *One round will do* means a round of sandwiches if, for example, the word *sandwich* appears in the previous sentence. Methods of this kind may make a theoretical shudder. Nevertheless it is instructive to see how far Dr Wilks has been able to push them.

But in a discussion called *Grammar, Meaning and the Machine Analysis of Language* rough commonsense is not enough. In describing his system Dr Wilks is already rather shaky. The rules for "possible messages" are said to be of a certain formal type; but in fact they are not of this type, and their true nature is cloaked in a good deal of idiosyncratic notation. Nor is his exposition very careful. At one point, for example, he refers to a definition which one cannot find until one reads the following chapter. And this is in a note to yet another rule notation which, incidentally, is printed three different ways on a single line.

In pure theory Dr Wilks's failings are more central. The second chapter is essentially a sideswipe against Chomsky, whose theory he rejects for philosophical as well as computational reasons. But his points are taken much too far. The crux, perhaps, is whether the notion of "grammaticality" (in the sense of conforming to the rules of a given

"grammar") can have any empirical interpretation. For Dr Wilks it has none. Our "difficulty in understanding" *golf a round of would* for him be of the same kind as "our difficulty in understanding" *a round of trousers*. The problem is simply whether they are meaningful—"meaningfulness", of course, being the property his own rules are concerned with. But why is *golf a round of* so clearly a "mistake" for a round of golf? *A round of trousers* is not "correctible" in any similar way. Oddly enough, the Chomskians themselves have been apt to oversimplify the same distinctions; only they thought it was all matter of "grammaticalness".

And how are we to interpret a "grammar" of "meaningful messages"? Dr Wilks assumes, in effect, that there is a set of things that one can ordinarily and sensibly say. He emphasizes that figures of speech allow one to extend it; but for him there is still a sense in which it is possible to "decide formally of any utterance" whether it is meaningful or not. As a practical man he undoubtedly finds this helpful. But it is really nonsense, isn't it?

Sadik J. Al-Azm's *The Origins of Kant's Arguments in the Antinomies* (156pp. Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, £2.75). Is an interesting contribution to the historical aspects of Kant scholarship. The author argues with some plausibility that the Thesis in the four Antinomies of Pure Reason represent the Newtonian and the Antitheses the Leibnizian views of the nature of space and time. In other words the theses and antitheses are "substantially" the views expressed by Clarke and Leibniz in their famous exchange.

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Edited by Charles H. Shatuck. 1972. 11 vols.
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Warehouse on the Wash

VANESSA PARKER:
The Making of King's Lynn
226pp plus 70 plates. Phillimore.
£5.50.

Within the past twenty years or so, the study of urban history has been revolutionized in this country. The great historians of the recent past, most notably Tait of Manchester, usually confined themselves to profound, unrepeatable studies of the constitutional aspects of town history (though Carl Stephenson, the American scholar, devoted a good deal of his *Borough and Town*, 1933, to the topographical development of English towns). Since then other scholars have written about the topographical or physical, as distinct from the institutional, side of town development, and a whole new field has been cleared for cultivation. Another trend has been the near-sociological analysis of the structure and growth of nineteenth-century industrial towns. Altogether, urban history has become very fashionable.

There is yet another change on the way, of which Vanessa Parker's book is the best representative so far. One is familiar, especially on the shelves of second-hand bookshops, with the shoals of books which describe the "old buildings" of a given town with the aid of copious line-drawings and occasional colour-plates. The buildings were chosen because they were "picturesque" and the text was usually vague about dates and above all about structural details. Such books generally had little scholarly value, and are useful today chiefly as showing us how much has disappeared in the path of the German bomber or the motor-car. No attempt was ever made to describe the structure of these buildings; plans were almost never given; no attempt was made to relate the buildings to the classes of people who built them (other than ascribing anything large to a wool-merchant) or to the purposes they served as shown in their ground-plan and the disposition of their rooms.

In King's Lynn, Dr Parker has chosen a marvellous subject, one of the leading ports of medieval and Tudor England, a town rich in domestic, commercial and public buildings from the fifteenth century onwards. Since she began work, much has been wantonly demolished, but Lynn remains one of our best towns to look at, and at least (though it is no excuse) the vanished buildings have been carefully recorded in her architectural drawings and photographs. Dr Parker's book contains scores of line-drawings, all well reproduced, but the photographs (more than forty in all) have been badly treated. Many are deplorably fuzzy (no doubt due to a poor economical process of reproduction) and are unworthy of such a capable and expensive book.

Dr Parker begins with an account of the rather complicated geography of the Wash rivers and their changing

ing courses which culminated in the formation of the major estuary of the Great Ouse. On the eastern shore of this estuary the then bishop of Norwich, who owned the land, founded a town in the year 1091. This flourished from the beginning, so that by the end of the fifteenth century the port was described as "the turnkey" of a river-system that served no fewer than eight rich counties.

Recently the town was chosen as one of five historic towns for special study by the Department of the Environment, but this proposal fell through for local reasons. In default, Dr Parker's book covers a good deal of the ground from the medieval period to the beginning of the eighteenth century, with special emphasis on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There is, incidentally, a curious blind spot in her failure to explain how Lynn came to change its name from Bishop's Lynn to King's Lynn in 1537. This is not simply an antiquarian point for it resulted from Henry VIII's outrageous pillage of the see of Norwich in the preceding year: the plunder of the bishops' lands has been completely overshadowed by that of the monasteries. Lynn became royal property and twenty years later it obtained the fee-farm of the town from Mary. Roughly speaking, this meant the right to control its own affairs and destiny in every way upon the payment of an annual rent to the Crown.

Dr Parker relates the buildings she has measured and drawn to a wide range of documentary evidence in the borough records and elsewhere. Here we have the proper marriage of fieldwork and the written record. She discusses the ground-plan of the important merchants' tenements, whose dwelling-houses generally lay on a main street and whose property stretched back a considerable distance to the river-front. This was so valuable that individual plots were only twenty or thirty feet wide (about the same as a High Street frontage in a busy medieval town), so that most of the warehouses prevented their gable ends to the river and were loaded straight from the ships. Moreover, as the river-front was reclaimed and more land was added to the shore, the richer merchants extended their warehouses to the new waterfront. Lynn had also extensive fish-houses, and a considerable shipbuilding industry which must have left some traces on and near the river and its creeks (here called "fleets").

Not only does Dr Parker go fully into the economic background of the private and public buildings of the town but she also examines the composition of the governing body. Older historians apparently studied the constitutional history of boroughs for its own sake, but it has a much greater significance than they perceived. Why do men form oligarchical governing bodies? Surely not just for the enjoyment of power, but also for private profit. One

recalls Adam Smith's remark that bodies of merchants seldom meet together without conspiring against the public good.

Lynn was given a new charter in 1524 setting out a completely closed oligarchical self-perpetuating body of aldermen, and common council. The first two groups were the "potentiores," the powerful. The rest of the community divided between the *mediores* the *inferiores*, a simple classification that would take a modern sociologist three or four chapters of text to unravel and describe. After this is still the set-up in English government, behind the façade of annual democratic elections.

In Lynn this oligarchical control meant in practice the greater merchants dominating the government of the town for generations. Thus between 1530 and 1540 only five of the mayors were merchants, and it was rare for any but merchants among the aldermen. This meant in practice that commercial and public business was carried out by an oligarchy and fairly rapidly so, producing a kind of town we see today. In the Elizabethan city council, another wealthy community, dominated by a few families, and it was they who constructed the first ship-canal and a dock, between 1564 and 1580. Doubtless lent themselves to private plundering of the common as a whole (just like local government today) but they also indirectly much public good. Dr Parker saw this apparent contradiction and was led to postulate a famous "invisible hand" which chanced intended only their own gain but which were by a strange hand to promote an end which no part of their intention. The invisible hand worked, that of Lynn in these generations but in a stagnant or declining economy it did not work in this way.

The "unreformed corporation" have had a bad time in the books, certainly in school history, and Dr Parker was right to examine the personnel and power of Lynn corporation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for a great deal to do with the popular development of this town. She has shown the way to another new path in urban history. This is a pioneer book, and number of faults that might be expected in any original work. *The Making of King's Lynn* has how a number of disciplines made to come together: archaeologist, the architectural, the economic and the institutional historian, all have a thing to offer to urban history. They usually do it in their separate compartments. Dr Parker has a brave attempt to knit them one book.

often deficient in taste and concern, and there is a critical note at some recent urban development.

Notwithstanding that the book is essentially for the traveller, it is heartening to find a competent posting of footpaths and the opening of long-distance routes and those in the Pennines, the Welsh Marches.

The short descriptions of county are now for the first grouped together at the beginning of the five regional sections. Each of the five regional sections contains a number of general introductory pages on such matters as accommodation and currency for travellers. Both for them and for the traveller the *Blue Guide* in this series is still very good for money.

On and off the road

STUART ROSSITER (Editor):
Blue Guide to England
703pp including 81 maps and plans.
Bonn. £3.50 (paperback, £2.25).

It was through the England of 1920 that the original *Blue Guide* conducted the tourist. Now in the maturity of an eighth edition, this standard guide has adapted itself to the changes of half a century and remains an almost indispensable companion for visitors to this country. Revision, as Stuart Rossiter observes, was no easy task. There is attention to the attractions of a country, to the things which the traveller must perforce move at: sixty or eighty miles an hour or be resented as an obstruction. Nor for that matter, in dwelling on the charms of a village where motorists are entirely

dissuaded from lingering. On the other hand, there are many country places where comparative quiet has returned thanks to a new by-pass road, and towns where restriction of traffic has relieved the sightseer who is willing to walk.

Civil reconstruction since the Second World War has made it necessary for the description of many towns to be entirely rewritten and for town plans to be redrawn. But in all cases the guidebook performs its threefold purpose of telling one how to get there, what may be found on the way, and what to look for on arrival. The function of a guide is description rather than critical comment, and it is only in Mr Rossiter's thoughtful introduction that broad reflections are made on the changing scene. Here both the conservationists and the progressives are found too

JANUARY of this year there was a repeat showing on BBC Television of Alec Guinness reading "Little Gidding". Very good it was in *Radio Times*: twenty minutes devoted to a great poem spoken by a great—and, for the purpose, admirably suitable—actor. On the other hand, however, the whole affair seemed distinctly less than satisfactory. It demonstrated in that last space, most of the reasons why television finds it hard to handle poetry.

News-casting gives some idea of the limits of television's ability to tolerate individual reading or talking. Sir Alec Guinness was very much alone and in a very much alone setting: doubtless the poet was to focus our attention on him so on to his words, but that was what happened. The camera did not follow him with angle and length of shot; the picture obstinately remained that of one man reading. The eye got lost and the attention was distracted. Worse, at moments Sir Alec Guinness's gaze from the page and right out of the screen, fixing on the eye, accusingly, and our minds could not meet his own. It was uncomfortable: who was this fellow coming at us in our hearts and home life uttering strange speech?

Naturally the director knew this and did not go on uninterrupted: he cut from time to time to rural scenes complementary to the words. Alec's voice went on; the eye took in the change of scene, and became so interested that there was little power of attention left over for the ear. By the end of twenty minutes we had not quite heard the poem and this is the dilemma of any television: straight reading is usually dull; illustrate the reading unless the image corresponds closely indeed with the words, as in the case of the Norman Conquest. Head of Television Arts at the BBC, feels that in the past the poet ought to be more aware of the camera, but is only too well aware of the difficulties. Except for his own voice, he seems to be under very much pressure to solve them, for of minority interests poetry is one of the most minor. You would have thought that living poets and their followers might push for poetry on television, but according to Mr Swales they do nothing of the sort.

If we turn to radio there are by comparison few problems in the way of poetry. It is a natural for the radio, which can be criticized only for being rather little with it. Peter Austin and Anthony Thwaites have come to the end of six months' work on the twenty-minute radio programme from the ground from Chaucer to the late 1920s and early 1930s: this good work behind it, Radio 4 has gratefully reverted to current poetry to fill the slot. In other ways poetry seems to attract attention. Radio has a strong sense of day and night, and music; its few hours of poetry have mainly gone to talks and plays. This may be changing: there has been more poetry, and it is merely the same amount of poetry presented: the little interval anthologies, for instance, or Iain Hamilton's attractive two-part study of the poets of the Second World War? Both have tried their hand at readings to an audience—although this is usually tied to some notable presenter. Either way, it is remarkable what a difference

live performance makes: it creates a satisfactory tension, a sense of occasion, of bardic festival. If poetry then this radio technology might provide an answer. There is little lack of visual interest in a group of poets declaiming their poems, and other people's work—some of it, I think, would take the eye off the viewer cringing in his armchair. Something has already been attempted by Henry Livings and Alex Glas, both accomplished actors—in the case of Glas, a very good one; although their material is not always the best, the presentation worked well indeed.

Writing earlier in this series of poems and of the type of fiction which made itself to broadcasting, I noted that two things place in-

BOOKS AND THE BBC—3

Poets, children, and reviewers

BY DAVID WADE

capable limitations on what radio and television can give us: first, the physical boundaries inherent in them; second the imperative to give the audience-cum-body what it wants. What audiences appear to want is in some ways even more limiting than one might suppose. Take readings, for example: Radio 4's *Story Time* with its criterion of "a good story well told" should give plenty of leeway, and on it we find such favourites as *The Cruel Sea* (slightly bodilized) or *Vice Versa*. Now if you compare the listening figures for these two quite distinct types of material, one thing emerges: people like Anstey and Monsarrat; they do not much care for Sir Walter's phantasmagoria.

This is illustrative of a more general state of affairs in broadcasting, and one which may also help to explain the scarcity of poetry: the familiar goes down well; stories which are strange and unaccountable find a relatively small audience—and this applies even on radio, which prides itself on being the medium of the imagination. Thus not only poetry and ghost stories but science fiction, too, gets a rather poor reception; so far as I can ascertain, that extraordinary vision, *Childhood's End*, has never yet been read on radio. Of course it is said of science fiction generally that it has failed truly to grasp the imagination of the reading public, and I have heard this attributed to the circumstance that much of what used to be fiction has now become science fact. There must be other disincentives—like the appalling style in which much of it has been written and its widespread inability to create interesting characters and human situations.

Television, as watchers of *Star Trek* will confirm, has its own reasons for fighting shy of SF—such as the vast cost of avoiding visual banality. This would not deter radio, although the literary shortcomings must do so. Yet science fiction does exist which is both well written and interesting from a human standpoint; precious little finds its way into the loudspeaker. It shares this fate with other out-of-the-ordinary material, with fairy-tale and legend, too. It is hard not to fall in with that rather depressing conclusion, one firmly implied by my alimentary metaphor: that in the main we listeners and viewers want of broadcasting not that it should provide new and thought-provoking experiences but that it should confirm what we already know or believe about our world.

Stories for the young

There is one arm of broadcasting which clearly and consistently goes against this and does so, evidently, with its audience's overwhelming approval: children's television. The alimentary parallel does not quite extend to children: for what are no doubt compelling reasons of evolution, they are in the literal sense the world's most conservative feeders and have to be cajoled into experimentation. Tell them a story, however, and they gather round in droves. This is exactly what the BBC's *Jackanory* does, drawing extensively on literary sources: *Beowulf*, Beatrix

Potter, Alan Garner, the Rev Awdrey's railway engines. It casts the net wide and there is a high content in its catch of fairy-tale, myth and the exceptionally resonant novel of the kind created by Rosemary Sutcliffe. It is interesting to see what else the young will take that adults will not: classic adaptations, as I have pointed out, turn and run from the visible narrator (or even the invisible *Jackanory* depends on and makes a feature of him. Actors, chosen for their narrative skill, tell the stories, which are illustrated by film or visuals: Beatrix Potter's own paintings; specially commissioned, superbly atmospheric drawings for *Beowulf*; dramatic photographs for Alan Garner's *Elidor*. Here there is no difficulty in meeting the narrator's eye, no sense of incomprehensibility. What is happening? Why is the same technique held to be inappropriate or unsophisticated when applied to adult story-telling? Is there something inherently juvenile about it? Or perhaps something no longer juvenile enough in adult audiences?

The child who thrives on legend, myth and fairy-tale is among adults arguably a stereotype, and one might suspect that the quantity of traditional material is there primarily because that is what the grown-ups in charge believe their audiences ought to like. Monica Sims, who runs Children's Television at the BBC, says that in fact this kind of material—the story with an element of strangeness—genuinely is the most popular; this was mirrored and confirmed in a story competition which *Jackanory* ran. In her view children seem to need whatever it is that myth and legend have to give; without being reduced to hysterics, they need a certain element of fear and uncertainty. Adults, apparently, need nothing of the sort, or do not think they do; certainly they ask for little, and get what they ask for. Classics of legend turn up from time to time on radio. *Gilgamesh*, *Morte d'Arthur*, *Gawayne*. Usually these are given to Radio 3, where doubtless is their standing in literary history which assures them a hearing by an immeasurably small audience. It is the sense of such stories that there are other realities. Large numbers of children have no problem with that concept and you would think that we, as adults confronting a world we find ourselves less and less able to account for, would find it easier, not harder, to accept that the testimony of our own eyes and ears may not tell us quite the whole story. The evidence is all the other way: in overwhelmingly large numbers we do not want to know of visions, intuitions, insights. This is a condition which we call maturity, and the child's openness to such perceptions is attributed to an ignorance which we hope will grow out of as quickly as possible.

Contrary to what we are told of television—that it atrophies the capacity to read—the makers of children's television are so sure of its stimulating effect that they think it worthwhile to notify public libraries and publishers when a particular book is about to be broadcast. There are other pointers in the same direction, and this brings me to the last aspect of the book/broadcasting relationship I wish to touch on: review and criticism, and their effect. Facts and figures are hard to come by, but one publisher

told me that, after the smart Sunday papers, he would hope for a review on radio. Another said that by far the most influential mention a book can receive comes not from any of the overt book programmes but from Radio 4's *Today*. With an audience of 41 million for each of its two editions this may not be surprising, especially as the programme is said to be essential listening for newsmen and literary editors wondering what new marvels they are missing.

The author, not the book

On radio there are two regular reviewing programmes: *Now Read On* (Radio 4) goes out every week; *Arts Commentary* (Radio 3) is occasionally devoted to books. The limitations of both are the ones we have already spoken of, although they apply very much more to *Now Read On*. This attracts an extremely heterogeneous audience of

about 200,000, which must be catered for with as many as possible of the hundreds of books pressing for attention. In each programme seven or eight titles may be mentioned; it will be a lucky book which gets more than six minutes to itself, equivalent perhaps to 600 words, but words for speaking on the air, ephemeral and without the density of print. What is the special attraction of a radio review? Is any kind of mention to an audience of that size worth having? Does the personal flavour of the spoken word have compensations? Is it that, as the name implies, *Now Read On* tends to select only those books about which it can say something commendatory? By comparison *Arts Commentary* is less kind and more demanding: it attempts only about half the number of titles and expects greater comprehension of the spoken word from an audience numbering some 50 per cent of that for *Now Read On*. It likes to build its programmes round a theme and, where Radio 4 diverts its listeners by interviewing authors, *Arts Commentary* relies sternly on professional critical comment. In weight it probably comes as near the Sunday paper level of reviewing as the spoken word can manage.

Radio 3 can offer also something approaching the kind of essay-review to be found in the *TLS*. Commonly a talk on this wavelength will be based on a recent book; discussions, too, may do the same. *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* was handled as a conversation between a psychologist and a sociologist about B. F. Skinner's major contention. On Radio 4 the method is different: here Lord Robens, Lawrence Daly and others gather round a microphone to talk about the view of conditions in the mining industry given by *Ten Year Storm*, or Anthony Jay outlines the thesis of his *Corporation*

The Grimani Breviary

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION BY MARIO SALMI

One of the finest examples of late medieval illuminations, this Flemish breviary was acquired in 1520 by the Venetian cardinal Domenico Grimani and is now the most precious of the manuscripts in the Biblioteca Marciana. There it has long aroused the admiration of scholars, but never before have all its 110 pages of miniatures been reproduced in colour in book form. The sacred and secular scenes, rendered with the humour and love of colour and detail characteristic of the Low Countries, offer a picture gallery of life in Flanders in about 1500. We see landscapes and townscapes, interiors and exteriors, costumes and customs from the nobleman at his banquet to the peasant ploughing, building, fishing or bringing in the vintage. Many pages also have delicate and beautiful borders depicting flowers, fruit, butterflies, jewels or wood-carvings. Professor Salmi's text covers the breviary's history and the style and iconography of its three artists (Alexander and Simon Bening, and Gerard Horenbout).

With 140 illustrations, including 110 full-page colour plates.
£25.00

Thames and Hudson

Man with supporting illustration. Both of these were pre-publication programmes in Mr Jay's, and the very day before—and it is interesting to reflect that a book is probably the only clearly identifiable product to which the BBC would give what is virtually free promotion.

It will be clear that, adapting and reviewing apart, Radio 4 likes a book for its topicality, and it has a great penchant for talking to authors. The same considerations will larger seem to apply to television, which does not have a single straight book-reviewing programme of the sound broadcasting type. This is what one would expect: reviewing in this manner consists of one man speaking and, as we have seen, television does not care for that—it fails to occupy the eye. Three programmes on BBC Television habitually discuss books: *Review*, *Omnibus* and *Line Up*. Of these, *Review* has probably done most and is closest in its approach to the methods of Radio 4; that is to say, it finds an author in the public eye, or one who, it considers, ought to be, and it talks to him about his latest book, his work in general, his ideas and opinions. *Omnibus* deals more in features based on writers (Milton, Clare, Ian Fleming), while *Line Up* might be said to be interested in authors primarily as news, in their topicality, in the immediate social and political implications of what they have written. The MIF study, *The Limits of Growth*, had a recent programme to itself; earlier, Gay Talese talked about the Mafia, on which he had just written in *Honor Thy Father*; Tom Sharpe's South African novel, *Robinson*, was discussed and extracts read, but this was exceptional—few novelists appear on *Line Up*: presumably they do not often satisfy the programme's criterion of immediacy.

Television has this difficulty: in adaptation it has problems in giving us the author at all; in book discussion it can give us very little else. What interests the camera-microphone is how a man appears, what he sounds like, what his opinions seem to be and what relevance they can at once be seen to have to our current preoccupations. Television sees writers as personalities; neither that nor his capacity to perform in the terms it demands have much connexion with his stature as a writer; but that consideration easily gets lost.

My examples so far have been taken from the BBC. The independent companies do less with books: in the past few months London Weekend's *Aquarius* has put out a programme on Dylan Thomas, but has otherwise obtained. The other programmes I have seen conform almost invariably to the familiar pattern of gazing at authors being interviewed or performing in discussions. There has been one exception to all this and that we owe—perhaps by way of atonement—also to London Weekend. *Cover to Cover* was devised by Bryan Magee and he presented it, electing, in pursuit of his gift for high-grade popularization, to concentrate exclusively on currently available paperbacks. We

saw some authors, certainly, but we saw also illustrators, art editors and what-ifs, the editors of the book business, the agents and publishers. There were readers as well: in the programme I saw Mr Magee called on half a dozen very average readers indeed who were invited to chip in and give their reactions to the books under discussion. Whether in any sense this was better than other television book talk, I do not know: there was something fresh about it and it was exceptional in its recognition that for many people reading is not a cultural pursuit, but a way of filling in an evening by the fire or even of sending yourself happily to sleep. It differed also in its assumption that the entire process of making and marketing books is interesting in itself.

As I implied earlier, the connexion between so much chatting about books and the buying or borrowing and reading of them is hard to specify. It is vaguely agreed that for a book to appear on the air must do a bit of good, particularly if it happens in the weeks before Christmas. A large and certain persuader is one I have not mentioned before: the Open University. According to Dent, sales of their edition of *Hard Times* rose sixfold when it became a set book, and Penguin have similarly uplifting experiences to report. The comparison with other arms of broadcasting is hardly fair: the students have no option but to get their texts. Despite its obvious influence, the aims and methods of the Open University are so different from entertainment broadcasting as to form a subject on their own. That apart, the promotional effect of programmes is felt keenly among paperbacks. Penguin have reason to be grateful also to the BBC's unending run of classic adaptations—not the ones on radio from which, I gather, no effect is detectable, but those on television. It is not uncommon during the transmission of a classic—*Daniel Deronda*, say, or *Little Women*—for sales to double, although what everyone must be praying for is another *Parasite Saga*. Sales of *The Man of Property* rose from 2,000 per annum to 150,000. The second and third volumes were also spectacular; all nine increased their combined sales to 1½ million. Not surprisingly, ambitious preparations are in train for *War and Peace*, and the forthcoming Tolstoy serial must be causing hope to spring, if not eternal, at least for the six months of its screening.

Hazards and rewards

I have left some gaps—not only the Open University but broadcast education in general, and there may be others. In any event it should be now be clear to what extent and in what ways books interlink with radio and television. While they provide both media with abundant and on the whole nourishing material,

the media—as we have just seen—contribute considerably to their commercial welfare. Looking at the picture from, so to speak, the point of view of the written word itself, the process of transfer to broadcasting has many hazards: by their nature radio and television tend to simplify and water down, and their intimate, not to say apprehensive, relationship with ourselves, their glutinous, impatient audiences, makes justice to the highest literary standards impossible. Arguably—and especially in television—apprehension features rather large, inhibiting experiment in presentation which might solve some of the problems I have referred to: loss of author, for example, or the embarrassment of televised poetry. Perhaps BBC-2's *The Other Channel* will be more courageous.

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One man's rule

RICHARD CROSSMAN:
Inside View
117pp. Cape. £1.95.

In 1963, after eighteen years in the House of Commons observing governments at work without ever having been a member of one, Richard Crossman wrote a brilliant polemic introduction to a new edition of Bagehot's *The English Constitution*. Consciously pressing home the central argument of John P. Mackintosh in *The British Cabinet* (1962), he proclaimed the arrival of Prime Ministerial Government:

The post-war epoch has seen the final transformation of Cabinet Government into Prime Ministerial Government. Under this system the "hyphen which joins the buckles which fastens the legislative part of the state to the executive part" becomes one single man.

That man was the Prime Minister, whose powers had been steadily increased, first by the centralization of the party machine under his personal rule, and secondly by the growth of a centralized bureaucracy, so vast that it could no longer be managed by a Cabinet believing like the board of directors of an old-fashioned company. "With the coming of Prime Ministerial Government," Mr Crossman added unflinchingly, "the Cabinet, in obedience to the law Bagehot discovered, joins the other dignified elements in the Constitution"—although, like the Monarchy, the House of Lords, and the Commons, it retained very real reserve powers.

Nine years later, after six years' experience as a senior member of Labour Cabinets, Mr Crossman returns to his theme. He does not modify one syllable of his argument; rather, he reinforces it. *Inside View* consists of three Godkin lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1970, not published at the time, with a sharp introduction written a year later, when the Labour Government had been swept from office and Mr Crossman was back in his old place on the Opposition back benches. "After five years of service in the

Government", he writes, "I was relieved to find that my central thesis had survived the test of first-hand experience."

Another member of Harold Wilson's administration, of course, has ranged himself against the Muckintosh-Crossman thesis of Prime Ministerial supremacy. Patrick Gordon Walker, in *The Cabinet* (1970), concedes an enhancement of the Prime Minister's power during the past hundred years, but, with much chapter and verse and many modern instances, he argues that there continue to be restraints upon him that "make Prime Ministerial government impossible". For Mr Gordon Walker, the Cabinet remained "the sole source of political authority".

Mr Crossman now replies: "We have been told that the crisis which at one time threatened to unseat Mr Wilson in the summer of 1969 demonstrates the limits of Prime Ministerial power. Of course it does! No sane man would pretend that a British Prime Minister cannot by mismanagement or continuous lack of success undermine his position and even compel his colleagues to remind him that he is not indispensable. At any moment the Cabinet may be compelled to reassert the traditional status of their chairman as *primus inter pares*. Indeed, every Prime Minister frequently plays this role either of his own volition or by force of circumstances."

The two former Labour Ministers are almost certainly not so far apart in their judgments as Mr Crossman's confessedly provocative and polemical tone suggests. The power of Prime Ministers has increased, is increasing, and no doubt will continue to increase for the reasons Mr Crossman gives. Nothing could prevent it except the creation of a House of Commons in which all private members broke free from the party machines and formed shifting alliances against measures and ministries. No such House is conceivable, and it would be a recipe for chaos if it were. Even on a momentary complex of political issues like Britain's entry into the European Economic Community, nobody has ever seriously considered the possi-

bility that there might be a realignment of the two main parties at Westminster, sweeping Roy Jenkins or more Labour MPs like Edward Heath, and Sir Robin Butler, and thirty Conservative opponents entry into alliance with Mr Wilson.

But a Prime Minister's power does not vary. There are times when he is unchallengeably strong, and times when he is weakened into the role of being one among equals. Mr Crossman and Mr Gordon Walker give examples. Mr Wilson was a powerful figure in October 1964, but he did not stay all-powerful. Mr Crossman writes:

Inevitably the decisions which shape the fate of the Wilson Government were placed during its first weeks; the commitment to fight devaluation and to maintain a military role east of Suez was made by the Prime Minister after consultation with a very few colleagues. But no member of the Cabinet was of questioning his right to do a way, and he was able to prevent deviation being discussed in the Cabinet. His personal position was weakened by the sterling crisis of July, 1966.

(Mr Gordon Walker, as Prime Secretary, was one of the very few Ministers consulted; Mr Crossman as Minister of Housing and Local Government, was not.)

For his part, Mr Gordon Walker has described in the second edition of *The Cabinet* how in 1967 Mr Wilson and George Brown, then Foreign Secretary, were overruled by the Cabinet when they proposed a form of preventive military intervention in the Gulf of Akaba before the six-day Arab-Israeli war.

When all is said and done, perhaps where sanctions reside. A Prime Minister's sanctions make a long, onerous task for the Party and Government, and Prime Ministers do hesitate to use their sanctions when they need them and know they are strong. The Cabinet and the House of Commons also have their own stock of sanctions, but they are used more sparingly, because they are more powerful than the party's own.

games and comedy shows and different from most of the other programmes. No matter how great the appetite of audiences, no matter how narrow the limits of the media themselves, no matter what the limitations of the medium, the writer must stand in "Little Gidding" in the Life of Clare, in any classic work, for something of value to give the worst that can be done. The worst is not done. The worst is what we see and hear comes by way of conscientious, affecting, at his best creative midwifery. We watch *War and Peace* this autumn it is sure that, as we read the book, many of us will be moved to look at our own lives with doubt, with questioning, power even with new insight. I take that to be the point.

POETRY

Reviewers and their victims

M. MATTHEWS (Editor):
The Critical Heritage
pp. 15.50.

JOHN O. HAYDEN (Editor):
Bards and British
pp. 16.50.

THOMAS L. ASHTON:
Byron's Hebrew Melodies
pp. 11.

Knowledge and Kegan Paul.

The "Critical Heritage Series" is one of some well-directed critical series in the new edition of the volume on Rochester (March 24, 1971). The reviewer there allowed, however, that some volumes would be better than others, and it must be said at once that M. Matthews's *Keats* is among the better ones.

John Keats, who was killed off one critique, just as he really seemed something great, was, cruelly, and (as it happens) wrongly, Keats was given a scanty critical reception—not only by Keats, Byron and Lockhart, but by the cowardly Jeffrey ("We never had to see either of them in the two volumes till very lately").

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stances" of Keats's "supposed death at the hands of the reviewers, and the early age at which he died," the publication history of Keats's poems, and the posthumous criticism both before and after the publication of Richard Monckton Milnes's *Life, Letters and Literary Remains of John Keats*.

The critical comments are admirably judicious, as when Mr Matthews exonerates Leigh Hunt from the charge that he "did not really believe in Keats and failed to champion his poetry as he ought"; "That Hunt did not answer the attacks on *Endymion* is no reproach (though he repudiated himself), since the pivot of all the attacks was precisely Keats's willingness to be praised by the despicable Hunt."

In an interesting paragraph, Mr Matthews identifies a "socio-sexual revulsion" that is "an oddly persistent feature of Keats criticism," Byron's "astonishing outburst" would have been even more astonishing if he had replaced Peter Quennell's coy asterisks with the text of Byron as given by Leslie Marchand in his *Byron: A Biography*.

Understandably, Mr Matthews does not make high claims for the critical acumen of the early reviewers. J. O. Hayden, in *Romantic Bards and British Reviewers*, is much more enthusiastic. "The early nineteenth century indeed stands out as a great age of literary reviewing," Mr Hayden writes, but says nothing to substantiate the implied claim that the reviews of this period were of a higher general level than, say, Victorian reviewers. One may happen on an interesting idea or an able expression in this book, but most of these reviews share the general faults of reviewing in this age: fearsome prolixity and relentless moralism.

Of course, what everyone remembers is the savagery:

There was a tradition of bluntness and even acrimony in the periodical criticism of the time, and although it may occasionally shock the reader new to that criticism, it is surely pointless to become more upset at it than those living at the time.

Those living at the time were considerably upset. The point, really, is not about the bluntness but the unfairness. Many writers must have rejoiced on reading the beginning of Hazlitt's *Letter to William Gifford* (Gifford was editor of the *Quarterly Review*): "SIR,—You have an ugly trick of saying what is not true of any one you do not like; and it will be the object of this letter to cure you of it."

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Since the reviewer wrote that the "offences against 'morality' in the poem are almost innumerable" it is a testimony to Byron's immaturity at this time that he should have written to the editor calling it "a very able, and I believe just criticism."

There are signs of haste in the composition of this book. There is no index, and no attempt to edit the texts with any consistency. Mr Hayden runs three sonnets by Keats together into a single poem. Elsewhere he says that lines 13-15 of a poem by Keats are italicized by the reviewer. The poem in question is a sonnet. Might not some niggling doubt have prompted him to count again?

Byron's *Hebrew Melodies* is a collection of thirty short poems written in 1814 and 1815 and given to Isaac Nathan to be set to music. About half are on Jewish themes. Byron had no talent as a lyrical poet, and none of these poems is completely successful. One would therefore not have expected a critical edition of them to have the full-blown majesty of bibliographical scholarship, but then one would have reckoned without Thomas L. Ashton. This preposterous book begins with a sixty-page introduction surveying Byron's collaboration with Nathan, the composition of the poems, their early printing and their reception. There follows a forty-page critique of the poems, much taken up with technical niceties that would furnish material for a whole series of essays in the *Jeder* on Dick Minn. Then there are ten pages of notes on the text. At last we get to the text itself, only to find that it is submerged with textual notes perturbed apparently at random either at the end of the stanza, at the end of the next stanza, or at the bottom of the page. The explanatory notes,

which explain very little, and which in any case are largely taken from previous editions, do manage to stay at the bottom of the page. Four appendices follow, containing Historical Collations, Contents of Editions Collated, Calendar of Manuscripts, and Calendar of Editions. (This last gives title-page, format, collation, and so on, in the best modern manner.) Mr Ashton has collated twenty-five copies of his copy text, and collated his copy text with twenty later editions of *Hebrew Melodies*. Oddly, since he gives so much else, he does not give the melodies of the *Hebrew Melodies*.

The only textual variants that have the slightest interest come from Byron's manuscripts. Mr Ashton has contrived to conceal the evidence of these pretty thoroughly. A typical textual note, to "Its years as moments shall endure," reads: "[Shall] [7m?] (11's) years (but) (us) moments shall endure." What reader is going to take the trouble to reconstruct the text of the manuscript from this? If Mr Ashton had wanted to perform a modest service to scholarship he would have forgotten about his collations and his twenty editions, and published Byron's manuscript versions in full with an early edition on a facing page, in the decent obscurity of a scholarly journal. (Even then it would need to be treated with some caution. On the evidence of this book, Mr Ashton finds it difficult to quote more than a few lines even from printed sources without some error in transcription.)

This work has all the trappings of scholarship, but it lacks any sense of scholarly economy and proportion. It is a sobering thought that if all Byron's poems were to be edited on this scale the edition would run to some 130 volumes.

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Viewpoint

BY ALAN PRYCE-JONES

"So you're a writer", said the young man in a Rhode Island jail, looking at me as though I were a primate behind bars in the Bronx Zoo. "You don't find writers in Indiana, where I come from."

This surprised me, because my impression over the years has been that all Americans are on the verge of writing a book, usually an autobiography. "If I were to tell it as it is," they say with reverence, "boy!"

Europeans write for various motives: for the love of it, for money, for fame. Americans, I conclude, write as a means of clinging to an unreal world; they write to create an anchorage, to assure themselves that they really exist.

In many cases it is debatable whether they do. The tough individualist American of the past has become homogenized along with American milk, bread and steak. He is a creature of complexes, greatly worried by the possibility of being in any way different from his neighbours. He looks on himself as a victim: of government, marriage, children, the boss, and everyone poorer than himself; of foreigners and of the unfamiliar generally; of obesity and buckskin. He feels marked for misfortune, which is why he contemplates an autobiography.

When it comes to the actual writing, however, he is blunted by a difficulty. Words, to the contemporary American, are not simple, elusive things which conceal or divulge precise shades of meaning; they are not concepts to be loved and chosen, but, on the contrary, something like fill to a builder. They cover holes of thought, they offer a flat surface.

That it is possible to offer any generalities whatever about American writing is odd, since its roots are so disparate. If you read at random among the better novels of the day, you might think, in turn, that American life is bounded by the Brooklyn, Irish and the Jews, the poets of grass and beads, the defeated Southerners, the Black victims of Newark or Detroit. But they have this in common: a negative attitude towards words.

Any words will do, so long as they convey an approximate meaning to the 'cooperative' reader. Perhaps the words have been so far removed from a means of communication in America, very few are used; few but large.

To some extent, then, we must agree with those who, following the lead of Marshall McLuhan, announce the demise of the written word, since the word will drive out the better. From time to time words, however, themselves—in Saul Bellow's *Mr Sammler's Planet*, for example—But not since the death of Henry James has American writing nurtured the verbal equivalent of a millionaire's successful investor in words. On the contrary, the most eminent American writers have been delib-

No equivalents exist in America. The *Book Review of the New York Times* has attempted a face-lifting under a younger editor, but it remains exactly the same. *Book World*, which survived from the old *Herald Tribune* but never had more than a foothold in New York, ceases publication this month. There remains the *New York Review of Books*.

The April number of *Esquire* published a long piece about the *New York Review*. For such a piece there are, in terms of American literary journalism, certain prerequisites. First, the piece must be long indeed. It must go into minute details of no general interest beyond the assurance of devoted research. A character or two has to be dug up and pinned on to the descriptive surface. An air of respect—why otherwise use so many columns of type?—has to be printed by an occasional tabe-like drop of irony.

The *New York Review of Books* does not need this build-up. It is an admirable magazine, but it is not, and does not aim to be, a review of books. It is a review of certain ideas, certain shifts of the founders of the BBC Third Programme used to call "trend and tendency". Among these ideas literature plays a small part, foreign affairs, sociology, politics a larger one. When it was founded a few years back, a legitimate complaint was that too many foreign writers were encouraged to expound their long-familiar views. Today, it prints many more American experts, among whom its far Easterners are outstanding. But it does very little to fight the loneliness of the American imaginative writer.

Is he, then, a vanishing species? One might suppose so, were it not for the packed shelves of new novels in Doubleday and Scribners, the endless collections of academic critical essays, the slim volumes of verse at those rare bookshops which handle poetry at all. I doubt if any of these imaginative writers sell more than a handful of copies, even when they are glowing reviewed. To be a success in terms of money (which in America brings with it power and reputation) the writer has to dilute imagination with foreign bodies, like reputation and opinion. The typical success product at this moment is Herman Wouk's *The Winds of War*, a novel of grotesque badness unless non-novelistic standards are applied to it. Characters, not style, atrocious; incidents, not events, get off the ground. For the incidents are taken from the realities of the Second World War, melted into some kind of plot, served like a whiff of anesthetic, to ease the pain of the prose.

Once again, neglect of the power of words is responsible both for a success and a disaster. The success accompanies such things as the sale of paperback and movie rights, which are automatically handed out to what is in essence a business proposition unconnected with literature. The failure arises from an assumption that the public is actively hostile to words; that, like the Vice-President, it considers those who use words efficiently as effete.

Earlier this year a book appeared, called *The Decline of the West*, by Peter Schrag. If Mr Schrag is right, the Protestant ethic upon which the United States was built is in decline. He sees American civilization as a graying and nervous, its original norms in abeyance, and their place filled by conflicting intellectual *Majlis*.

It is certainly true that the Protestant, or Wasp, ethic has become all but invisible, and it is also true that there are some unexpected links between that ethic and the decline in the good name of American writing.

In the nineteenth century, it was possible for the British to patronize American writers, rather as the Established Church in England patronized the Non-conformists. In both cases it was possible to say to a lesser extent, "Without us you would not exist. You pose no threat to us, and we shall not need to extirpate you, never a proud member of our club." Then came the moment of freedom, when American writing, to the

loose from its past, and set off its own pattern. It might not have done so had the Wasp ethic not dominated society through the first half of the century. An establishment held the country steady; it also gave writers something to react against. It was always been convenient for Europeans to find Americans naive, absurd, if not actively dishonest. The European attitude to American literature was therefore faced. It was stressed that Americans, to write or compose or publish, had to emigrate. At the same time, Europeans, oppressed by the loss of their own past, tried to find in American vitality, to the free of American forms, rather the spirit of the grandparent who himself living on the good past.

Today, however, the Wasp ethic no longer holds together. It has led to an abrupt change in aims and the intensities of American living. Up to the Eisenhower Americans lived more and more independently of Europe. They their own way, they recorded civilization after their own caring less and less about the matrix—British, French, Italian, German—which had shaped them in the past.

Then, as the different *Majlis* over, and no single establishment held firm any more, came the Vietnam war, came the unwilling minds that the major period of American expansion had been halted for the time being, the consequence national incoherence set in. A great fatigue has crept on the nation, rather like the fatigue which enveloped Europe after 1918. Europe, however, could fall back on history. Disagreeable things had happened to Europe before, and the continent somehow had survived. America, of which the history is constitutional rather than epic, has no such fall back on except the glory of the revolutionary war, the hotly (which Americans prefer to forget) the War Between the States, and the recollection of being pulled into the world wars willy-nilly.

What, then, is the serious American writer of 1972 to write about? Few books of self-analysis, and even fewer of self-analysis, are published. Little fact of American life is put to pieces to make, if not literature, at least a grimace.

At the top, voices are tuned differently: to make bracing use of the past, or to make a noble future. They are graying with silence, or a silent hope; but with belief not at all.

Since it is impossible for writing not to reflect the society in which it lives, it is not surprising that we find mysteries. In a golden age of pieces may be created; in a silver age wit and charm come into their own. But in an age of little tin gods and out of their thrones with a small catch of nothing but a small catch of wind.

Which is why American writing, like William Maxwell's delightful *Anecdotes*, The past can not be taken away. It is, so to speak, banked. And it is all the better for being none too glamorous. The past of past Americans like to recall that of the boy next door: a past which can relate to Natty Bumppo and Tom Sawyer.

This is the past become a past, a past. It is the past shores up the grind of subway and lunch counter, it bestows on the concrete cliffs the gleam of dogwood and the gleam of fishing streams a long time ago. No doubt the vision is a mental one. No doubt the feeling of today have a steady fascination which deserve their own literature. But there is nobody to write it. Body strong enough and delicate enough to tackle the second half of our century as it is lived in the United States. Writers either go or fail, or make their private peace of ritual. What they do not do is group the realities which surround them, except in terms of a personal trauma. And even if they could they do not possess the in which to express those realities.



May Day in London in the late eighteenth century (reproduced from *The Autobiography of Francis Place*).

Francis Place, the radical tailor

THE VOLUMINOUS Place Papers in the British Museum have long been thought of as a treasure for social historians even by those who have never seen them. For the most part they have been studied in detail by his admirers, although Place's views on radical leaders of his own time, and of whom he knew personally, have often been taken over uncritically.

During the last few years, through more sophisticated analysis of provincial radicalism, social historians have become confident in Place as a witness: independent to the left of "history" and below "has had the same result. Everyone would now agree with a comment of Thomas Kelly in a 1962 *Blenheim Lecture* at Birkbeck College that if ever a biography was to be called definitive it is *Francis Place's Life of Francis Place*, first published in 1898.

Perhaps this is the right moment, for Place's autobiography was published. Incomplete and out of date, it has never generally been thought of as the most important item in the Place Collection. Extracts from it have often been quoted by writers since Graham Wallas, but not everyone who has studied it in the British Museum has bothered to read it as a whole. The reason it has not been published before is that historians have not thought it worth while. Mary Thale admits that the autobiography is in places tedious and long-winded and that the style is wooden and repetitive. She notes that the reason Place's son Francis did not publish it soon after his father's death in 1854, as he set out to do, remains uncertain. He went through it carefully, like a good mid-Victorian, cutting out a number of passages which he thought were indecorous. Perhaps he felt, long before historians were directly concerned, that his father had outlived his time and that the book would have very little appeal.

The Autobiography of Francis Place
Edited by Mary Thale.
308pp. Cambridge University Press. £5.00.

Dr Thale's edition, intended to be a faithful transcription of what Place wrote, will have considerable appeal if only because Place, who prided himself both on his rationality and his soundness of judgment, has become a figure of controversy for the first time since his death. She recognizes this herself and is at pains to point out the inadequacies of the autobiography. Throughout she discharges her editorial responsibilities in a critical spirit. Although her introduction does not identify some of the basic issues of recent debate as sharply as W. E. S. Thomas did in an interesting article in the *Historical Journal* in 1962, the defence has gone and we are now some distance away from Graham Wallas. Given the qualifications, historians must continue to acknowledge an immense debt to Place for having kept, like lesser men later, an immense stock of records which otherwise would have been lost. He was deeply interested in the fortunes of people whose names have not passed down through history, and he was determined that even if their names were lost their experiences should not be. Bentham, whom Place thought of as a friend, not least because Bentham never treated him as a social inferior, once said that he was ideally suited to be Home Secretary. As Dr Kelly has remarked, however, he would probably have been more at ease as a Permanent Secretary.

There is much that Place's autobiography does not tell us, particularly about his politics. We do not learn, for example, why he became a radical; what, if any, were his associations with official circles during the 1790s; how and why he became involved in Westminster politics (a topic recently re-examined at some length by J. M. Main); what he thought about parliamentary reform after 1815; what was his part in the repeal of the combination laws and how he conceived of the role of trade unions; what was his contribution (still debatable) to Reform Bill politics between 1830 and 1832; how he helped to draft the People's Charter and how he subsequently came to judge the Chartist; and (with the exception of a brief note about Sturge and the Complete Suffrage Union) what was his role in anti-Corn Law politics. Many of these subjects are dealt

'God help the English novel'

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Our interest will be in 'literary' work, novels with some lasting value quite distinct from any immediate market appeal, and we would be delighted if we could foster a small, sound group of authors, a new generation for the 1970's and 1980's, to match our list of twenty years ago.

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WERNER BLUMENBERG:

Karl Marx
Translated by Douglas Scott
196pp. New Left Books. £1.50
(paperback, 85p)

The Unknown Karl Marx
Edited by Robert Payne
339pp. New York University Press.
\$8.75.

The late Werner Blumenberg in 1962 published a brief biography of Marx which has now been translated into English. Gareth Stedman Jones's preface warns the reader that Blumenberg—like Julius Braunthal, Maximilian Rubel, G. D. H. Cole and Harold Laski—"was not a Marxist" and that his work "can be firmly situated in the Social Democratic tradition". So of course can Franz Mehring's classic biography, published in 1918; that is to say half a century before the Althusserian sect, of which Mr Jones is a distinguished ornament, had gone to work on the subject.

It is true that Mehring is by now somewhat out of date. The principal source for a just estimate of Marx's character and personality is the four-volume correspondence with Engels, a severely truncated edition of which appeared in 1913. The complete text was published in 1929-31 by David Riazanov, the founder and director of the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow. Blumenberg has made full use of it, as well as of the material preserved by the Amsterdam Institute of Social History, and his brief study can be described as authoritative. It is copiously illustrated and the paperback is an excellent buy at 85p if one

ignores Mr Jones's eccentric preface, which tries to make a Leninist out of Marx.

In recent years so much has been written about Marx the theorist that it is a relief to come across a brief and scholarly study which simply states the main facts about his life without pulling any punches. Marx was frequently ill and financial problems weighed heavily on him until 1869, when Engels was at last in a position to set aside a considerable annuity for him. By then his health had been undermined by overwork and *Capital* remained unfinished. Blumenberg gives a full account of the miseries of exile which afflicted Marx for two decades after his enforced departure from Germany in 1849, and he does not hesitate to stress what is indeed obvious to any reader of Marx's correspondence, namely that he became increasingly bitter and cynical in his judgment of acquaintances: not to mention caricatures like Lassalle and iniquitous such as Bakunin, who used the First International as a platform for his curious nostrums.

There is also a brief reference to the rather inglorious episode which led to Marx acquiring an illegitimate son—a subject never mentioned in socialist hagiography around 1900, but which nowadays is unlikely to shock many people. On balance Marx emerges as a flawed genius—an intellectual titan whose personal and domestic miseries prevented him from completing the great work he had undertaken. It is somewhat characteristic that the crucially important *Grundrisse*, drafted in 1857-58, took almost a century to see the light of print.

In 1837, while Marx was a stu-

dent at Berlin University, he perpetrated a number of poems which he had the good sense not to publish. They included the first act of a "phantastic drama" called *Outland* as well as a number of lyrical poems addressed to his fiancée, Jenny von Westphalen. Robert Payne has had the weird notion of composing a volume made up in part of this youthful poetry, in part of reminiscences by Jenny Marx dating from 1865, followed by Marx's well-known diatribes against Palmerston, written in the 1850s for Chartist newspapers and recently published in book form. There is still something to be got out of reading the *Secret Diplomatic History of the Eighteenth Century and the Story of the Life of Lord Palmerston*. The same cannot be said of *Outland* and the rest of the romantic stuff Marx composed at the age of nineteen for the benefit of his father and his fiancée. As he himself recognized, he lacked the gift to turn his emotions into satisfactory lyric poetry. What has induced Mr Payne to assemble all this heterogeneous material in a volume mysteriously entitled *The Unknown Karl Marx*, heaven alone knows. The portrait that finally emerges, he solemnly informs the reader in his preface, "is that of a driven romantic, hating fiercely at the mercy of forces over which he had little control, ungoverned and ungovernable." The best cure for this kind of fictional biography is Werner Blumenberg's short but scholarly study.

There is also a brief reference to the rather inglorious episode which led to Marx acquiring an illegitimate son—a subject never mentioned in socialist hagiography around 1900, but which nowadays is unlikely to shock many people. On balance Marx emerges as a flawed genius—an intellectual titan whose personal and domestic miseries prevented him from completing the great work he had undertaken. It is somewhat characteristic that the crucially important *Grundrisse*, drafted in 1857-58, took almost a century to see the light of print.

A banker with worries

The Correspondence of Lord Overstone
Edited by D. P. O'Brien

Volume 1: June 1804-September 1849. 452pp.

Volume 2: September 1849-December 1861. pp 453-980.

Volume 3: December 1861-April 1863. pp 981-1548.

Cambridge University Press. £9.80 each.

Many years since I remember seeing a very fresh and nice-looking young gentleman and being struck with astonishment at being told that he was a director of the Bank of England. I had always imagined such directors to be men of tried sagacity and long experience and I was amazed that a cheerful young man should be one of them. (Walter Bagehot, *Lombard Street*).

Lord Overstone was hardly a cheerful young man and though never a Director of the Bank of England was in his time probably the most influential figure in its councils; the *DNB* gives him much of the credit for the 1844 Act. Although his political life was brief and insignificant and his banking activities came to an early end with the conferment of a peerage in 1850, he remained throughout his long life (he died in 1883 at the age of 87) a venerated and lugubrious pundit whose distrust of Gladstone was soon to belie the heady promises of a radical youth.

Samuel Jones Loyd was born in 1796, the son of a Unitarian schoolmaster and preacher named Lewis Loyd; the latter had made a highly advantageous marriage to a Miss Jones, the daughter of a Manchester banker, and he quickly became the most successful partner and the wealthiest of his father-in-law's private bank. The son went through Eton and Cambridge, unencumbered by academic distinction, and was admitted to partnership in the bank at the age of 20. His seven years in the office of the *Hansard* reporters, but left him with no special distaste for the public life, as his subsequent career showed. His bank partnership became increasingly profitable and at his death he was quite rightly regarded as one of the richest of the century. Just reward for longevity and conservatism.

It would be pardonable to think that Overstone's life spent on the "fin"

W. H. C. SMITH:
Napoleon III
296pp. Wayland. £5.

It is quite true, as W. H. C. Smith points out, that few rulers have fared so badly as Napoleon III at the hands of historians. Perhaps he deserved it. The circumstances of his seizure of power seemed so unpardonable to republicans as his blundering and finally disastrous use of that power did to his conditional supporters. Repudiating both legitimacy and popular sovereignty, Bonapartism was forced to rely on the prestige of success and if this ran out in 1870 it was largely the Emperor's own fault.

His publishers, if not Dr Smith, claim that he has written a rehabilitation of Napoleon III, but he is unlikely to make many converts. He disposes of the first twenty-two years of his subject's life in six pages, which prevents his doing much to enlist our sympathy for a young man who felt himself condemned to eminence by the burden of his heredity. Thereafter his approach is sympathetic but he offers little evidence to convince the sceptical reader and engages in some special pleading. It is all very well to argue that the coup d'état of December 1851, where the "only casualties" were "it seems some six hundred", was a good deal less horrible than the butchery of the Communards; but to condemn the latter does nothing to excuse the former. Dr Smith's most effective

threequarters of the nineteenth century—was likely to be a happy one for a moneyed man not overburdened by a social conscience, especially one in the fortunate position of a London private banker; but this was not the case. He worried a great deal about matters that hindsight shows to be unfounded. His much-loved daughter's marriage to a well-connected and highly respected soldier (who won the VC in the Crimea), was ADC to the Prince of Wales, became a Minister, and ended his life as Lord Vantage), made him ill with worry; he thoroughly mistrusted the joint stock banks and thought they would ruin themselves and cause a financial panic; he predicted that the sale of the family bank to the District Bank in 1863 would prepare a dark future for the younger members of the family. On the other hand, his expectation of imminent war with France did at least afford him the consolation to be got from keen support of the volunteer movement—an unexceptionable activity for a country gentleman safely in his sixties.

In the world of affairs, he served on the Public Works Loans Board, appeared as a witness before many select committees on banking and other financial topics, and was a Commissioner for the Great Exhibition. In 1850 he got his peerage, became a trustee of the National Gallery, and was elected a member of the Senate of London University. Later on, as a member of the Commission, he was active in blockading proposals for the introduction of decimal coinage and indeed can be held greatly responsible for its hundred-year postponement. In the matter of the Poor Law his strict Benthamism was tempered by humane considerations; his economic thinking was logical, clear and had about as much relevance to conditions in the world today as the "Lord Brand's remark, quoted with approval by Gornovoy Rees in his autobiography: "If there had been equity investment in the seven-teenth century there would have been no Oxford Colleges today."

D. P. O'Brien's starting-point for this massive work (three volumes totalling more than 1,500 pages) is a quotation from an article by Sir T. B. Gregory: "No one can read

argument—not so much in support of Louis Napoleon as against his opponents—is that many of the "republicans" who emerged towards the end of the Second Empire were, in fact, disguised despots whose impatience to revive parliamentary juggling of the old days had little to offer to the mass of the population. It is clear, however, that the Emperor, whatever his intentions, had provided the working classes with concrete reasons for supporting him.

Dr Smith's account of domestic policy is somewhat perfunctory, tends to stick to politics, fails to give the economic achievement of the regime its due credit and, rather oddly, has nothing to say about a brilliant, if moribund, social philosopher of Paris, even Hausmann gets only a passing mention. He is more at home with foreign policy, which he treats in greater detail and with more conviction. He makes much of a good case for the Emperor, being less influenced by Catholicism and less concerned with nationalism than has often been assumed. But if Louis Napoleon was not the prisoner of conflicting interests of opinion, this increases his personal responsibility for the inconsistencies of a policy that alienated his possible allies in turn and often left him the isolated spokesman of the events he should have been able to control. The book is made up of an extraordinary number of prints and the reviewer's copy is apart while he was reading it.

Overstone's Traits for the first time without experiencing a certain loss of inhumanity... a certain impression of hardness... a certain... While on a different point, Dr O'Brien found the original Overstone's correspondence... G. W. Norman in a lot of... and he has supplemented... with Norman's own papers... result is revealed as a collection of 923 letters dating from 1804 to 1863 and these include the exchanges of fifty years with G. W. Norman, himself a talented letter writer, director of the Bank between 1810 and 1872 and grandfather of Lord Vantage Norman. The letters have been carefully annotated and indexed and if Lord Overstone himself does not emerge as an especially appealing figure, the charge of inhumanity can no longer be levelled against him. One of his last letters to *The Times* (to whose letter column he was an assiduous contributor) signed, "An old Eton boy", was critical of a case of bullying at Winchester. Furthermore, he was certainly generous to Norman's children and other private dependants.

The historian of economic thought will find a mine of information here on the middle years of the nineteenth century—a mine all the more exploitable for being less shafted and signposted. The *Cambridge University Press* format and presentation of this important work.

The origin of the seventh Workshop pamphlet, *From Self to Glanville* (94pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), is John Taylor's own activity in the College History Workshop. He was working-men's clubs. He reminds us that they are more numerous now than ever before—the *Club* and *Institute Union* have a membership of three million members and takes the story back to the formation of the union in 1869, making good use of its archive and drawing a vivid picture of one of the most characteristic aspects of working-class life in this country, a content and neglected link between the worlds of Victorian self-help and television glamour.

Diving into the universe

MURIEL RUKEYSER:

The Traces of Thomas Hariot
John Gollancz. £3.

PETER J. FRENCH:
John Dee
Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£1.75.

It is often said that sixteenth-century England had a third university, in the form of the Inns of Court and the Inns of Chancery, but it also had its Open University, in a manner of speaking, with John Dee (1527-1608) and Thomas Hariot (1560-1621) eminent members. Graduates of Cambridge and Oxford respectively, they took their inspiration from different sources, but they had one thing in common, namely an interest in subatomic physics. Hariot was a mathematician of note, a philosopher in the line of Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and Agrippa von Nettesheim. He was a theologian, an antiquarian, a philosopher of many sorts, and a mathematician of sorts.

Seen in the light of modern scientific orthodoxy, Hariot was an alien, not the prisoner of conflicting interests of opinion, this increases his personal responsibility for the inconsistencies of a policy that alienated his possible allies in turn and often left him the isolated spokesman of the events he should have been able to control. The book is made up of an extraordinary number of prints and the reviewer's copy is apart while he was reading it.

Each time he dived, deep under defeat. And whatever is under is also over. They dive into the universe, at the opening on the line that joins being and non-being. More historians will find themselves out of their depth. They will try in vain to decide on what conclusions stem from historically admissible evidence, and what from the writer's own imagination. They will object to the technique of the dubious analogy. To take an example: it seems very probable that Hariot was the first European to have died from a cancer induced by tobacco smoking. We know nothing of Hariot's response to his last illness; ergo, Freud's courageous acceptance of death is made to stand proxy. In the same way, a picture of an unknown Dutchman stands in for Hariot on the dust-jacket and inside the book. (Had an authentic picture survived, it could have accompanied the Government Health Warnings.)

Although traces of Hariot the man

Undermining the astrologers

Oresme and the Kinematics of Celestial Motion
Edited and translated by Edward Sarton
University of Wisconsin Press
(HUPG). £9.50.

This is a translation of Oresme's *Tractatus de commensurabilitate vel incommensurabilitate motuum celi*, which once said that a scholar with sound knowledge and penetrating vision would not even consider astrology worthy of refutation; but Oresme, the fourteenth-century theologian and scholastic, was deeply concerned when Aristotle acting as arbiter. It is all too unfortunately inconclusive; the dream ends when Aristotle is on the point of giving judgment. There is little doubt, even so, that Oresme sided with Geometry—with the incommensurability of motions that leads to variety in phenomenon at the cost of traditional celestial harmony.

Edward Grant edits the text, translates it, and provides it with introductions and notes, thereby smoothing the reader's way to such an extent that it would require a great effort of will to change it. The

recognize him from parts of *The Traces of Thomas Hariot*, but they will need more than ordinary powers of comprehension to understand it all. To offer a summary of a work written in a poetic vein would obviously be to misrepresent its purpose, but a few salient points of reference are called for. Hariot was in the household of Raleigh, as a companion, tutor, teacher of navigation, and (if we are to believe some sources) sower of the seeds of atheism. He served as an expert on the Indians in Raleigh's "Virginia" (North Carolina), and also as cartographer and natural historian. Later, when Raleigh's fortunes had taken a tumble, he received the patronage of Henry Percy, the "Wizard Earl" of Northumberland. Thus protected and encouraged, he produced his remarkable scientific results, some of them anticipating in important ways Descartes, Snell, and Galileo, among others. Mrs Rukeyser tries valiantly to convey an idea of Hariot's science.

She conjectures freely. It is reported that Hariot's very many surviving manuscripts are being prepared for publication by a committee of scholars whose style is likely to be less oracular than hers. He bursts from history into legend, declares the front of the dust-jacket, as though to warn the sober historian that there are no pretensions to a move in the opposite direction. Chronologically speaking the reader is never quite sure where he stands, and topologically he is likely to suffer even greater confusion.

Each time he dived, deep under defeat. And whatever is under is also over. They dive into the universe, at the opening on the line that joins being and non-being. More historians will find themselves out of their depth. They will try in vain to decide on what conclusions stem from historically admissible evidence, and what from the writer's own imagination. They will object to the technique of the dubious analogy. To take an example: it seems very probable that Hariot was the first European to have died from a cancer induced by tobacco smoking. We know nothing of Hariot's response to his last illness; ergo, Freud's courageous acceptance of death is made to stand proxy. In the same way, a picture of an unknown Dutchman stands in for Hariot on the dust-jacket and inside the book. (Had an authentic picture survived, it could have accompanied the Government Health Warnings.)

Although traces of Hariot the man

are in short supply, not to say hard to interpret, Mrs Rukeyser's book has a certain relaxed charm, while at several points it even reveals a capacity for tenacious research into minutiae. One cannot but admire her perseverance in the face of a flat refusal of cooperation by the Governor of the Tower of London. Her reply might be incorporated in some future "Speeches for All Occasions".

I said "I understand what you are saying, and I will ask for nothing, I only want to tell you where I am in my work; and that from this prison men have come out, not only to the new world, but only to the Northwest Passage, but to the moon".

The Governor rose, squared-off, military with his clipped mustache, and said to the Guard, "Show this lady anything she wishes to see".

Dr French adopts a more orthodox approach to his subject. He makes no claim to have written a full and detailed biography, but considers rather Dee's extraordinary tastes and talents in an Elizabethan setting. Dee had minuscule eulogies from Aubrey and Richard Foster, also the good will of Elizabeth, but John Foxe and Meric Casaubon left him with the reputation of a conjuror, and a man misled by devils. Thomas Smith, Dee's first biographer, took over what Dr French regards as Casaubon's "jaundiced portrayal" of his subject. From sinking lower than "vampires and ghouls of Eastern story" (1885), Dee's stock improved with Charlotte Fell Smith's biography in 1909. More recent writers have alerted us to his importance as one who taught marine navigation, who introduced Vitruvian architectural principles into England, and who advocated Copernicanism, which, as everyone knows, is a Good Thing. Dr French goes beyond these fragmentary findings and aims to show that the "magical and the practical experiments did not represent two parallel movements; rather they were inextricably tied together in a thought process that was evolutionary." So although Dee's outlook was formed by Hermeticism, metaphysics, attempts to speak with angels, and so forth, "he also promoted practical science and utilitarian education, toleration and religious harmony".

We are not to dismiss Dee's mysticism as "sheer nonsense", it seems, since he was a "brilliant representative of a philosophy that inundated Renaissance Europe—Hermeticism". And it is not an accepted principle of some historians that one does not heap opprobrium on an individual for conforming to the mores of an influential, not to say interesting, group? By describing

Dee's historical position vis-à-vis a so-called "intellectual movement", Dee's own thoughts are raised above the level of scrutiny. What Aristotle and Plato actually wrote is still fair game for modern critics, but to the extent that the ideas of a Dee, an Agrippa, or a Ficino run the risk of being thought incoherent, they are safely cocooned and put out of sight in a mummy-case labelled, oddly enough, "intellectual history". This is a weakness of *John Dee*: it simply fails to provide us with any sense of involvement in Dee's thought-processes. Angel-magic, for example, and the hint of "fantastically complex calculations that are based on astrology and numerical equivalences to the angels' names", together attract little real comment beyond this:

Despite the modern view of such magical attempts, one is impressed by the practical benefit that Trithemius and Dee hoped to obtain from the use of angel-magic. If one substitutes the machines of our cosmological system for the angels of theirs, analogies with the wonders of modern electronics are not difficult to conceive.

Hermeticism, where it is possible to refer to the writings of Festugiere, Jotien, and Frances Yates, comes off rather better, although some of the translations from Festugiere are pretty well unintelligible. One of the theses advanced is that "Hermeticism raised man from the status of a pious and awestruck observer of God's wonders and encouraged him to operate within his universe by using the powers of the cosmos to his own advantage". Aristotle's universe, as Festugiere emphasized, was merely intelligible; Dee's could, in addition, be manipulated. Dr French argues that the revival of Hermeticism marks "the dawn of the scientific age because it unleashed the driving spirit that inspired man to compel natural forces to serve him to an extent never dreamed of before". But did it?

To decide the matter, one naturally looks for examples which were essentially new with Hermeticism. It is not enough, for instance, to show that Dee applied mathematics to such practical arts as optics, architecture, and navigation, for these subjects were well established along mathematical lines long before. It is not enough to mention in a footnote the Hermeticism of Harvey, Boyle and Newton, without showing how important a component it was in their positive empirical achievement. It is irrelevant to claim that John Dee "proposed a viable theory of experimental science considerably before Francis Bacon formulated his own"; although this is certainly a matter of

some interest, which requires more by way of support than a remark that P. R. Johnson pointed it out "some time ago". Dee's preface to the English *Euclid* was no doubt forward-looking, and in Dee's mind might even have been integrated in a "magically oriented philosophy", but this is hardly the extravagant thesis which was initially advanced.

John Dee was an insatiable collector of books and manuscripts, and an antiquarian of some discrimination. After making an interesting outline survey of Dee's library, Dr French concludes that its contents reveal that "Dee was catholic in the most fundamental sense of the word, willing to consider both sides of an argument and to synthesize when possible but unwilling to dismiss any point of view out of hand". But how many of his manuscripts did Dee so much as peruse? We know he could buy medieval books for a song—that their pages were indeed being found in a Oxford library. We know that Dee often owned several copies of the same work; and that even if he purchased an individual work with discrimination, it was likely to be bound up with others. Under such conditions, what is discernible about Dee's tastes from a list of his library? There is a similar indeterminacy about what is known of Dee's involvement in the affairs of Philip Sidney, Edward Dyer, and their circle. Sidney studied with Dee and associated with the renegade friar Giordano Bruno, and, in considering his exposure to different sorts of religious Hermeticism, Dr French uses well-balanced historical arguments and insights. This central chapter is strewn with problems which historians will find pleasure in attempting to solve, problems less awesome than those set by the book as a whole.

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The repertoire of the Aranda

T. G. H. STREHLLOW:
Songs of Central Australia
775pp. Angus and Robertson, £30.

In the world of music, the best scores survive most theories of music. Similarly in social anthropology, detailed ethnographies are the core of the discipline and they will outlive most of the "brilliant" and often trivial arguments of writers who see the proposal of theoretical abstractions as the quickest way through a doctorate to a senior university post. A good ethnography should be a complete theory in itself, as an account of another society's own theory of living.

When an intelligent and sympathetic observer has grown up with aboriginal people from Central Australia, and then devoted much of thirty-five years to studying their myths, songs and sacred dramatic performances, one expects his first complete account of their poetic heritage to be a major contribution to social anthropology. One hopes for exciting new information about the intellectual life of men and women whose rituals and social systems have baffled the minds and absorbed the energies of countless scholars for a hundred years—ever since aboriginal Australians were thought, wrongly as we now know, to be remnants of Stone Age Man who, like the kangaroo and the duck-billed platypus, had been cut off from the main streams of cultural evolution.

There is indeed much information about the Aranda and the Luritja of Central Australia scattered among the pages of T. G. H. Strehlow's book, in which he has viewed the songs first as musical compositions, then as "literary productions" (which is a strange contradiction of terms, since the whole point about these songs is that their existence depends on oral tradition), and thirdly as religious, ceremonial and social documents. But the reader is compelled to pick out the Aranda material in the fog of the author's Grand Theory about the origins of poetry, which takes up about a sixth of the book.

The very first paragraph of the introduction sets the depressing mood of the whole book. The author explains why he chose the word "songs" to describe sung or intoned verse by referring not to Aranda concepts, but to Latin, Greek and German words. Thus, addressing himself to the average reader who may not have "studied the classical tongue" and has only a superficial knowledge of poetry, he includes in his study of Aranda poetry a quick correspondence course in world literature with long digressions on and massive quota-

tions from Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Anglo-Saxon, Middle English, Norse mythology, Swinburne, Shakespeare, W. S. Gilbert, and a host of other sources. All these ceremonial citations were presumably intended to enlighten the reader by means of comparison; but they contribute absolutely nothing to our understanding of Aranda poetry, and may even conceal what it really meant to its creators. The author's somewhat paternalistic concern for public recognition of the intellectual and artistic ability of "our Central Australian makers of verse" is thereby cancelled out by his refusal to let the Aranda material stand on its own, or to allow Aranda informants to provide their own analytical clues.

It is too often Professor Strehlow who divides Central Australian verse "into categories according to the occasions on which it was sung and the purpose for which it was intended to achieve" or whose ears are used to determine the form of the verses, rather than the Aranda themselves. It may be that the author's and the Aranda's responses are synonymous, but supporting evidence is not given. That the Aranda have a clear idea of what they are doing is conveyed in those parts of the book where the author has taken care to explore or reflect the folk view. But again the inconsistencies are bewildering: for instance, the language transcriptions make no concessions to the uninitiated, but the musical transcriptions are forced into the European strait-jacket of bar-lines and rigid time-signatures such as 3/4, 4/4, 5/8 and 6/8. The impression of the polysyllabic vocabulary and characteristic "difficult consonant clusters" of the Aranda language is conveyed by writing out the songs in gigantic unbroken words, of which some consist of as many as sixty letters. It is therefore hard to get the feel of the spoken language; and the details of the discussion of the chief syllabic and phonetic changes by which it is converted into the language of song are remote for the reader, until he arrives at the ninth chapter of Part Two and is given a brief glimpse of Aranda syntax.

The musical picture never begins to be clear. Rules of music are stated or implied (e.g. on pages 21 and 90), "common rhythmic measures" are identified and even named and musical preferences are assumed, but there is no adequate glossary of Aranda musical terms. In spite of his knowledge of the language and his tributes to their intelligence the author seems not to have discussed with his "dark Australian friends" their own view of their music. There is no evidence to support the assumptions that the Aranda have their own "time signa-

tures" or that they conceive them as 9/8 + 5/8 + 4/8, or 2/2 + 9/8, or 7/8 + 8/8. One "measure" is said to be in regular 5/4 time, but it could as easily be described as 12/8, divided into 2 + 3 + 2 + 2 + 3. The transcriptions are often incomplete for the reader who wants some idea of how the music sounds: morotomic marks are hardly ever given, and even when stick beats are inserted, their duration is not given precisely. In the absence of an accompanying record or more convincing evidence of Aranda musical concepts, the reader must accept the transcriptions as they stand or remain sceptical, as does this reviewer.

The musical analysis of the songs is unlikely to satisfy any ethnomusicologist, but anthropologists will find much useful information in the third part of the book, which covers 408 pages and deals with the subject-matter and themes of the songs. Many common types of poetry were absent from the Aranda repertoire, because they had no place in the environment or the rituals which the poetry celebrated. The Aranda words for composing verse are all connected with the concept of naming, and verse was never a vehicle for the singer's own sentiments, because the songs were created by the totemic ancestors.

According to the aboriginal theory, the ancestor first called out his own name; and this gave rise to his most sacred and secret couplet or couplets of his song. Then he "named" the place where he had originated, the trees or rocks growing near his home... and thereby gained the power of calling them by their names.

Thus there was no true lyric verse; there were no "elegies, hymns, panegyrics, songs of triumph, prophecies, gnomic verse" or "riddles". Emotion was expressed in the very act of singing: daily routine was transformed both by the corporate nature of the occasion and the special form of the songs. They were sung when the Aranda came together for initiations into manhood, for ceremonies designed to increase the plants and animals which provided their daily food, or in times of sickness and death, which threatened the solidarity of the whole community. The sentiments of the songs were organized in complete, with more attention to intricate rhythms and to word-weaving than to the exact meaning of the sentences. Curiously enough, the author's interest in English language and literature does not extend to Edith Sitwell and Gertrude Stein, but he describes the effect of Aranda poetry very aptly as like "a peal of bell-chimes" in which variation is achieved "by changing just one chime in each sequence". Unfortunately, the important con-

tributions which the book makes to our understanding of Aranda poetry and of a notable human "experiment in living" are masked by its irrelevancies. The reviewer counted 950 different Aranda couplets, which with their English translations take up about a fifth of the book. This is only a fraction more space than that taken up by the quotations from *European literature*. In the chapter devoted to songs of human beauty and love charms, which is easily the longest section of Part Three and contains more Aranda couplets than usual, there are 32 pages of Aranda poetry, 20 pages of background information and analysis, and 28 pages of quotations and discussion of European attitudes to love!

Many libraries and anthropological departments will feel compelled to buy this book because of the nucleus of important material which it contains. In view of this it is necessary to go to the expense of having special Aranda, Greek and Anglo-Saxon type set up? And at a price of £30, might we not have had more than one colour-plate and a handful of musical transcriptions? There are no photographs of the people themselves or of their intricate body-paintings, or of the ritual actions and objects which accompany the poetry. There are no figures summarizing the basic musical and poetic structures that are used. There is no attempt to relate the structures of Aranda art, music and poetry either to each other or to the worlds which they portray.

The book, then, is probably as inaccessible to most people as were common human experiences to Aranda youths. Subsequence in the Australian desert was harsh enough, but an ingenious technology and careful control of resources made life possible and even afforded considerable leisure time. Why was this time not used to improve the standard of living, and why did tribal custom demand yet more suffering in the cruelty, blood and anger of circumcision and other rituals? Was a reign of terror really necessary to persuade "all active and ambitious young men" that memorizing the songs was "the highest goal in life", and that these songs were "magically potent charms" necessary for "all the practical pursuits of everyday life"? Is there some deep human desire for pain as a payment for keeping alive? Is not the desire to live sufficient to encourage young men to learn those parts of the songs which are necessary for survival, as cognitive maps of the environment? The Bushmen of the Kalahari have managed to live in similarly harsh conditions, but without the coercion and the violence and, it seems, without the poetry.

Professor Strehlow shows clearly how much intellectual effort went into the creation of Aranda poetry, but he does not consider whether it was worth the price or whom it benefited.

In "The Song of the Kwana" of Tera, an Aranda youth could hear of the transformation from violence to tenderness, means of sexual union in a society that would have delighted in Reich, and he might have been encouraged to believe that women were available to any man who made the effort and knew the charms. But experience should have taught him that the speaker did not provide "a young wife for every young man upon reaching maturity". He would have had to be "content first with a widow, the cast-off spouse of an elderly man; and often he had to seek an illicit friendship with a girl who was one of the several wives of a polygamist". Not surprisingly, the songs have perished since their youths have lost its appeal and have been able to break away from the grip of the old ways. Within fifty years of the arrival of whites, the songs were regarded as "embarrassing old men".

Songs of Central Australia tell something of the creativity and intellectual achievements of the Aranda's forebears, but little of the gentility of their lives, which poetry surely intended to reflect and enhance. It is essentially a shallow and unwinding account, which reflects not so much the autonomy and efficiency of the Aranda's subsistence economy in a harsh environment, as the verbal extravagances of their religious superstition.

Essays

JEAN ZIEGLER:
Le Pouvoir africain
227pp. Paris: Seuil, 20fr.

Le Pouvoir africain is a canny book—journalism mixed with sociology, psychoanalysis, psychology and Marxism. Although it gives the impression of a number of separate essays strung together to make a book, sometimes without any apparent link between them, there is a general theme: a comparison between African thought (very largely Burundi and thereabouts) and African diaspora (largely Yoruba and in Brazil). The most interesting and in some ways original part of the book is the discussion of African notions of time and history.

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The state of history in Canada

FROM A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

French. It is very much to be hoped that more meetings will be held in Canada, perhaps next time in Quebec or Montreal.

The record of research being carried out on French history by Canadians of both linguistic groups turned out to be most impressive and often highly original, it appeared to an outside observer who, before and after the conference, lectured in Halifax, Ottawa, Calgary, Edmonton and Toronto, that the position of history as a teaching subject within the Canadian university curriculum was seriously threatened, both from within and from outside pressures. A number of provincial governments, including that of Alberta, insist that the only history taught should be "relevant"—whatever that may mean—to the current problems of Canadian society. One can well imagine to what a sorry state history might be reduced in such a context. Furthermore, in many Canadian public schools, history has almost ceased to be taught, being replaced by "Social Studies": a prospect hideous enough in itself, which would no doubt have long ago produced an explosive situation on the Canadian campus, had it not been for the Canadian weather. The "revolutionary" season is mercifully short in a country in which the university year extends from September to April. There are, after all, advantages in living among *les arpentés de neige*. But this relative lack of "confrontation" and of staff-student antagonism cannot be attributed to any virtues within the Canadian university system. It probably owes more to the common sense of most Canadian students—less solemn than those of their neigh-

bours to the South—to a respect for the community in which they live, and to the undoubted, and extremely reassuring, survival of the rule of law. Perhaps the contrast, in this respect, between Canada and the United States, is what must strike most strongly anyone on his first visit to the Dominion.

So much for the Provincial governments. Partly under pressure from them, partly under that of the student body, attempts to subject students to serious written competitive examinations at the end of their third year have largely been abandoned. There are examinations, but they are somewhat farcical; and model answers can be purchased from agencies that specialize in this form of anti-education. Examinations have been supplemented by a system of continuous "assessment" of quite extraordinary complexity (another opportunity for the computer to take over from the human being). This may be "democratic" but, in terms of knowledge, understanding, assimilation and expression, it is pernicious. It is difficult for an outsider to obtain any clear impression of the intellectual baggage of a Canadian History student at the end of his course. But it was the complaint of many professors of History, including one who had formerly taught at an Oxford college, that their students were partly illiterate, that they never gained any experience either in writing or assessing evidence. They might at best be able to fill in one of those forms: "Mary Queen of Scots was: King of Afghanistan, Buddha, Bonedance, Joan of Arc, Sylvia Pankhurst, Germaine Greer. Cross out where incorrect."

In short, the purpose of history as a

cultural discipline was lost; and the degrees thus obtained would be worth about as much as the old Alibairian greenbacks of Social Credit days. This is a situation altogether deplorable, and all the more so in a country which produces many highly skilled historians.

A further source of contention within Canadian history departments is the fact that many of them, to a greater or a lesser degree—York (Toronto) is perhaps the extreme case—have been "colonized" by expatriate Americans. Some of these are historians of great talent who have enriched Canadian historical teaching. Others, however, are not in that class. Furthermore, they have brought from their own country a sense of guilt that often induces them to attempt to "radicalize" both their colleagues and their students. In some Canadian history departments, these expatriates have been an entirely disruptive force and, generally speaking, relations between them and their Canadian counterparts—or between them and their Canadian students—have been deteriorating over the past few years. There has also been increasing, and understandable, irritation at the amount of money given over, in research grants and visiting fellowships, by the Canada Council, to American historians still holding permanent posts in their own country.

It is to be hoped that competitive written examinations will everywhere be re-established—the example of some of the English new universities has witnessed eloquently to the dangers of "assessment" without

written examinations as well—and that, with the increasing sense of national identity—not, of course, the same national identity—emerging within the two main linguistic communities, schoolteachers will once more look to the past. No country can afford to neglect it, if it is to survive as an entity. And the Canadian past is a rich and very varied one, containing as it does English, Scottish, Norman, Breton, Poitevin, Indian, Italian, German, Russian and Ukrainian elements (in Edmonton, there is a thriving department of Ukrainian history). Canadians, as the monuments of their cities demonstrate, were once very conscious of this. And, unlike the big American universities, where history departments were often massively "germanized" in the late nineteenth century, seeking a methodological base, English-speaking Canadian history departments and universities have owed much more to the pragmatic approach of English and Scottish historians. There is no need for French Canadian universities to emulate the chaos imposed, since 1968, on the French university system.

One day, no doubt, when their consciences allow them, many of the American expatriates will return to their own country. If little can be expected of provincial governments (though that of Ontario seems well disposed towards history and that of Nova Scotia no doubt would be if it had any money), much can be done at federal government level. The Canada Council, an admirable, enlightened body, has put great efforts into the encouragement of research. The study of history is closely involved with the evolution of Canada itself as a national entity over the next few years. Whatever the future, in this respect, it will not be an indifferent one.

When the novelist is also a Separatist

JEAN ZIEGLER:
Le Pouvoir africain
227pp. Paris: Seuil, 20fr.

Englishman visiting Canada for the first time will probably know next to nothing about the literature of the country. At most he may have read a few lines of *Le Petit Prince* or *Le Petit Poucet*. Now will his French counter-
part be much better off, though at the moment he has the chance to read a number of French-Canadian novels in Paris and a certain amount of French-Canadian poetry. European ignorance is doubtless widespread. But for the individual, at least, it is largely due to lack of information and con-

fusion may perhaps be made of "god-image" from Hawaii, since it is extremely rare to find a specific complete with its covering of feathers, as this is. Among the few effective photographs are examples of wood carving from the Solomon Islands: bows, canoe-prow figures and other objects, decorated with pearl shell inlay. An enlarged portrait of a very fine shield decorated with a variety of patterns. Among pieces notable for their interest is a Trobriand mask acquired by the pioneer missionary James Chalmers, and a number of Australian specimens collected by Daisy Bates, the first woman to travel alone among Australian aborigines. Ethnologists and people in general will find this book providing information on their undocumented ancestors. It should appeal to artists in search of motifs and to lovers of good craftsmanship and good photography.

cases, the problem of being "côti qui parle français en Amérique" (to quote Jacques Godbout). For if the 1960s have seen the emergence of a new style of novel in French Canada, they have also seen the emergence of a new French Canadian novel, today's writers have had something to do with the separatist movement, and have felt deeply the political, economic and cultural dependence (or oppression) of their country. Their novels are not without political ambiguity, but their concern for the public world is more serious than that suggested by Robbe-Grillet's *Projet pour une révolution à New York*.

Any general account of recent Québecois fiction would have to include such important books as Gérard Bessette's *L'Incubation*, Jean Basile's *Le Grand Khan*, Réjean Ducharme's *L'Avant de l'été* and Marie-Claire Blais's *Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*. (The last two of these both explore—in very different ways—the typically French-Canadian theme of oppressed childhood, which was powerfully treated many years ago in an influential short story by the poet Anne Hébert, "Le Torment"). In particular, one would need to say something about Jacques Godbout, whose *Salut Galarneau!*, published in 1967, is coming to be seen as one of the landmarks of modern French-Canadian literature.

Hubert Aquin is very much a practitioner of this new novel. His latest book, *Point de fuite*, an assembly of essays, letters, plans for TV broadcasts, and the like, contains some fairly straightforward informative material for the readers of his novels, but it is set under the sign of its baroque title. The "point de fuite" is technically the vanishing-point of Renaissance perspective, and M. Aquin is obviously much concerned with *trompe-l'œil* and illusion. The book carries a cover design by M. Aquin himself, a noble baroque perspective, with nothing at all to do with the novel. This, in most

mémoire, he makes a great deal of play with Holbein's anamorphosis of the "Ambassadors", where the emblem of death is concealed under a sumptuous disguise.

At the same time, this title evokes one of M. Aquin's major themes, that of passing time, shifting reality, uncertain identity. All his novels are experienced as motion, they slide between our fingers or project themselves forward in time to a point beyond themselves. In the same way, in *Point de fuite* we can see M. Aquin's own destiny shifting and a new work taking and changing shape, running away from its author as he runs on towards death.

M. Aquin would be a compelling writer in any society; he is all the more compelling because of the links he forges between his own obsessions and the rapidly changing destiny of his country. He was involved early on in the Separatist movement, and this activity was vividly reflected in his first novel, *Prochain épisode* (1965). This is a novel of betweenness, written in detention and largely concerned with its own composition, which is seen as a compensatory activity between two events, a glorious date in the past (a triumph of love or revolution) and a triumphant day which has still to come, the "next episode" of the title. Immobilized, the narrator invents a rapidly moving and often baffling plot, apparently a mixture of the real and the imaginary, the whole book oscillates between the downward pull of despair, as the narrator feels himself cut off from life, drifting into the depths of Lake Geneva, and the formidable verve with which he pushes the story forward and carries himself on towards his release from prison and the liberation of Quebec.

M. Aquin's second novel, *Trou de mémoire* (1968), takes up the same themes of revolution, violence and eroticism and carries them one stage further. In addition, even more strongly than in *Prochain épisode*, he is here preoccupied with the complex form he is creating. This is a labyrinthine construction; its shifting point of view and movement to and fro in time emphasize a mystery at the centre. Gradually, an excessively violent tale emerges from the revelations of what appears to be a series of writers; we learn of the murder of the English-speaking Joan by a frenzied chemist and separatist, Pierre X. Magnan, who then passes for dead and pursues Joan's sister, the mistress of another revolutionary pharmacist in the Côte d'Ivoire. It is a disturbed and disturbing tale; M. Aquin constantly sets up parallels between his fractured and illogical forms, the violence of his protagonists and the state of his country. Once again we are between events, between the frenzy, destruction and unreality of the "trou de mémoire" and what appears to be a movement of hope at the end, where we are left with the pregnant, newly Québecois figure of RR, who has been raped by Magnan before his suicide: "je porte un enfant qui s'appellera Magnan—et jusqu'au bout, je l'espère, et sans avoir peur de son nom."

M. Aquin's third novel, *L'Anti-phosphore* (1969), is recognizably in the same vein. Once again we have the wretched show of strange, perhaps imaginary erudition, the play with parallels and mirror images, the preoccupation with eroticism and destruction. It seems however that M. Aquin has attenuated the whirlpool complexities of *Trou de mémoire*. The bulk of the novel is a domestic tale of rape and murder, told in diary form by Christine, the wife of the epileptic Jean-William "Fotestier". During a fit in a motel in Southern California Jean-William attacks his wife, who escapes only to be seduced (or raped) by yet another chemist.

Secretly observed by his wife, Jean-William kills the chemist and they both independently make their way back to Montreal, where Christine takes up again with a former lover, Robert. The jealous husband shoots and maims Robert, who is taken to a hospital; here Christine succumbs again, this time to a doctor, and finally commits suicide (like Magnan in *Trou de mémoire*).

All this is told in a relatively straightforward manner, so much so indeed that we are tempted to wonder if it is not a parody—the narrator stops occasionally to comment on her inadequate style in terms of medieval and Renaissance rhetoric. More importantly, the whole story is interwoven with a parallel story, that of a sixteenth-century scientist Jules-César Beausang (on whom Christine is supposedly writing a thesis). Gradually we learn about his life and death and about the inauthentic memoirs attributed to him but actually composed largely by a turncoat Turin priest who had assumed Beausang's identity. The effect is to cast doubt on the authenticity of all this sixteenth-century business (together with the extravagant erudition which buttresses it)—and thus implicitly on the foreground story. Like the other two novels it is fascinating, bewildering and depressing, but in them it was easier to see the point of it all than in *L'Anti-phosphore*.

Apparently this horror story has nothing much to do with its author's earlier political themes, but who knows? It shares with the earlier novels the destructive and illogical form which M. Aquin sees as inevitable in times of revolution, his aim being always to make the shape of his books express his own experience and the experience of his country. For the new reader, *Prochain épisode* is perhaps the best place to see how this aim is achieved.

Specimens from the Pacific

ROLAND W. FORCE and
MARYANNE FORCE:
The Fuller Collection of Pacific Artifacts
360pp. Lund Humphries, £10.

This sumptuous volume is not only a pictorial account of a magnificent collection, but also a memorial to the collector, Captain A. W. F. Fuller, who died on December 13, 1961, in his seventy-ninth year. An account of his life is given in an introductory chapter. He served in the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry throughout the First World War, but was invalided out of the army in 1918, and being unable, for health reasons, to follow his former profession of soldier, thereafter devoted himself, to what had previously been a spare-time pursuit, the collecting of ethnological specimens, mainly from the Pacific, but also from other parts

of the world. Fuller never himself visited the Pacific, but obtained most of his collection in England, as an opportunity offered, from auction sales, private collections and museums, or from friends who as missionaries or as Pacific scholars gave him examples of native arts and industries they had themselves acquired in their various fields.

Fuller did not collect at random. A signed quotation given, here begins: "The guiding principle in forming my collection has been, and is, the study of comparative technology and the relation to the material culture of the races of the Pacific area. From this it will be gathered that mere artistic quality or rarity is not my aim, although such objects take a place, and an important place, in the whole, and that comparatively unimportant specimens are of equal value, and, in many cases, equally rare."

The same principle guided General Pitt Rivers in making the collection which formed the nucleus of the

present Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, where it is still considered fundamental.

The collection, which began with a Fijian war club given to Fuller as a child, finally numbered more than 6,500 specimens. As it grew larger, and Fuller grew older, he became increasingly concerned about its ultimate destination. He wished it to be kept intact, and to be housed in an institution where it would be properly cared for, studied, exhibited, and generally appreciated. He would have liked to present it to the British Museum, but financial considerations made this impossible. It was eventually acquired by the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, by means of an ad hoc fund, the Fuller Collection Purchase Fund, which attracted some extremely generous donors. With this museum, Fuller and his wife enjoyed the most friendly relations.

Following two introductory sections, the volume is devoted to

photographs of individual objects, classified according to the major regions of the Pacific: Polynesia, Melanesia, including New Guinea, and Australia, Micronesia, and the Philippines. The collection is small, and none is figured. These major regions are sub-divided into their main island groups, each prefaced by a short account of its characteristics, a brief appraisal of its craftsmanship and notes on the objects illustrated. With the single exception of Fuller's portrait, all the illustrations are in black and white. All are excellent, and many can fittingly be described as superb. The authors stress that what is offered is a sample of their own choosing, and that the choice was made, partly with a view to photographic possibilities, certain categories, such as barkcloth, being omitted as needing colour to make an effective picture.

No selection within the compass of a review could give an adequate idea of the variety, interest and artistry of the objects shown. Men-

Man's inhumanity to whales

F. D. OMMANNEY:

Last Leviathan: Whales and Whaling
280pp. Hutchinson. £1.

Leviathan has been around a long time, so it is appropriate that a book dealing with this monstrous creature of oceans and dismantling the legends surrounding him should come from the retirement of a man who spent forty years of his life observing the facts of the real Leviathan, the whale, whose friend he has been since he first observed the whaling situation. The facts established in the opening chapters of *Last Leviathan* are much stranger than the fables they replace: F. D. Ommanney has written a book of wonders that should not be forgotten.

To our aggressive ancestors who began to hunt whales as soon as their skills in handling boats permitted, the largest of all swimmers in the ocean was an awesome fish, and a fish it remained until very recently. The transition from Leviathan to whale is full of marvels. For it was not a fish at all, but an air-breathing mammal which evaded the menace of size by being equipped to float as it swam near the surface. Dr Ommanney was an early recruit to the Discovery Investigation Committee when he arrived at South Georgia in 1930. It was all adventure for him. He was young enough to enjoy the stink and blood of dissecting the whales that were brought in. He estimates that Leviathan had about 100 million years to grow monstrous: at the back of his mind is the forty years of his own span. He arrived at a peak of productivity in the whaling industry. It was the southern heyday, when the northern nations were rushing south to catch the biggest whales, and few

had the sense to see that prosperity could last only a few years. It seemed to Dr Ommanney at the plenitude of his youthful zest that the butcher's shop was the natural successor of the butchery. Ecological equilibrium might be achieved between the natural power of the whale and the unlimited power of its human hunter. But this was not to be. The northern whaling industry rushing south to hunt the largest, fastest and most profitable of the baleen whales was the last example of a movement whose course is summarized at the opening of the book. Dr Ommanney remarks:

Man has been both blind and ignorant in the pursuit of the whale, for at least a century. He has hunted off the coast of Europe certainly since the nineteenth century it never occurred to anyone even to describe them until the end of the seventeenth, when porpoises and dolphins were dissected anatomically. No anatomical account of the great whales exists prior to that of the great John Hunter who described the Greenland Right whale in 1797.

The first accurate and graphic account of the natural history of the great whales was given by the famous Arctic whaling captain William Scoresby Junior who in 1820 wrote *An Account of the Arctic Regions*, a classic treatise which not only describes the habits and natural history of the Greenland Right whale but also describes for the first time the whale's food and environment.

Scoresby was the precursor of the oceanographers of today, especially those of the modern "discovery" investigations directed by his acute and inquiring mind towards the same ends.

The shadow of the book's main argument has already fallen across its page. Dr Ommanney remains thoroughly attached to his whales as his description moves across two hemispheres to describe the knowledge gained about their habits since 1930—and thoroughly detached from the activities of the whale hunter, man. His summary naturally follows the nine centuries of northern whaling since it was started by the Basques. At first whaling was a dangerous sport in which the odds were almost even. But gradually as the balance shifted against the whale, almost all the sea-going nations, on both sides of the Atlantic—British, American, Dutch, Scandinavian—were drawn into the hunt for quick profit. And ultimately the Japanese and Russians joined in from the Pacific. After all, from north of Spitzbergen to the latest rush to the Antarctic whales seemed to be everywhere. Why not join in the murderous fun of taking them while the taking was good? The turning point in Dr Ommanney's narrative is the establishment of the harpoon gun a century ago, for no one has found a less barbarous method of destruction. The factory ship and its powerful fleet of catchers have provided an appalling increase in the massacre-factor of whaling. And when in some of his reminiscences since 1930 Dr Ommanney takes time off to study with sardonic wit the worst of what goes on nowadays inside a factory ship, there is no doubt that his retrospect is near the truth. He knows the best and worst of what happens. This is what men do when they abandon all in favour of the urgent need to kill.

All things considered, man's inhumanity to whales may perhaps be explained if not condoned, as being in the nature of both animals. But consider, for instance, the relation between the Blue whale, the largest of the baleen whales, and the organisms on which it relies to maintain its monstrous being. This part of the story comes most clearly from Dr Ommanney's own work in unravelling the details of a marvellous food chain. The Blue whale, which is nearly 100 feet long and weighs nearly 100 tons, uses its baleen plates to suck in enormous soup-like meals of one of the smallest crustaceans, the animal plankton which swarms at the edge of the retreating ice of the Antarctic summer. This

alliance between the largest creature and one of the smallest is entirely conjectural. How swarming Krill and the Blue whale manage to maintain ecological balance is still in dispute among experts, and involves the author in an illuminating discussion. It leads him to explore the Antarctic convergence and its influence on the edge of the Antarctic ice as the richest of the whaling grounds.

The richest, but for how long? Ommanney ends his long hunt for accommodation between man and whale with a final question: How many whales? As things are and are likely to be, one concludes sticks out sharply. One can only hope that the Americans are enthusiastic about the whaling industry. But to construct a study of the natural history of a great whale from conception to maturity is far beyond our technological resources. The sad truth is that whaling scientists and observers that whales are too big for us to handle, we can only kill them in hope against dwindling hope. For all such men the only whale is dead whale. This is the sad conclusion of a sad and remarkable book.

For the émigrés ranged by Pasternak to Pavlov, from leaders to Ierdayev and all manner of political cranks and extremists left and right. It is very difficult, whether émigré writing or anything of lasting value but the code is certainly of cultural significance and Professor Williams has analysed the phenomenon. It distinguishes three phases in the relationship: Russophobia before the Revolution; Russophobia in the Weimar Republic; Spengler, Mann, Hesse; Russophobia again after 1933 nourished by the Baltic and right-wing Russians who had discovered Hitler in Munich the early 1920s.

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Photography

Boubat, Edouard. *Woman*. 143pp. Including 64 plates. Oxford: Aidan Ellis. £4.80.

Boubat is a distinguished French photographer in the romantic tradition and here he presents a black-and-white collection with a theme selected from his twenty-five years of travelling the world with his camera. The book opens with the words: "A 'true' photograph is strong, silent and speaks for itself." Nevertheless, a few pages that follow, somewhat inconsequentially, of quotations from Plato's *Symposium*. The book ends with a brief biography and a bibliography of the photographer's works. In between lie sixty-four full-page or double-page pictures, many of outstanding charm and artistry.

Politics
VAN DUYN, ROEL. *Message of a Wise Kabouter*. Translated by Hubert Hoskins. 98pp. Duckworth. £2.95 (paperback, 75p).

Roel van Duyn has been a leading figure in the Provos and Kabouters ("gnomes"), successive groups of imaginative activists on the far left of Dutch politics, during the past decade, and he has written several books, of which this is the first to appear in English. The "wise Kabouter" of the title is Peter Kropotkin, and van Duyn first summarizes Kropotkin's anarchist doctrine, and then extends it into such fields as psychoanalysis, ethology, and cybernetics, in an attempt to provide a basis for a modern form of scientific anarchism. The attempt is interesting but too brief and sketchy to carry conviction; it is also marred by mistakes and misunderstandings of various kinds. The translation is efficient, and there is a useful foreword by Charles Bloomberg.

Religion
CHRISTIAN, WILLIAM A. *Oppositions of Religious Doctrines*. 129pp. Macmillan. £2.80.

In this sixth volume in Macmillan's

"Philosophy of Religion Series", William A. Christian develops the line of thought advanced in his *Meaning and Truth in Religion*, studying the logic of religious discourse in order to discover the way in which doctrines in different religions stand in opposition to one another. Why is there such opposition, as (for example) between Nirvana and "Heaven", or between an interpretation of religious experience as theistically indicative and one entailing no such suggestion? How are metaphysical assumptions related to practical imperatives or "styles of life", etc? Professor Christian argues that this is a philosophical, not merely an historical or theological, issue. He analyses the various types of opposition; insists on the relationship between beliefs, affirmations, moral ideas, and other aspects of a religious tradition; and while recognizing the place for tolerance for better, for "charity" in the old sense, [as] a livelier and more full-blooded virtue", argues that this need not lead to a watering-down of firmly held faiths. In this compact and lightly reasoned book, Professor Christian has provided material for reflection in an age when many are more conscious of, and interested in, religious traditions than our own.

Social Studies
MAYS, JOHN BARRON (Editor). *Juvenile delinquency, the family and the social group*. 344pp. Longman. £1.75.

This comprehensive reader covers a wide range of British material on juvenile delinquency. Much of it is still concerned with the particular characteristics differentiating delinquents from other children and adolescents. Not surprisingly, emphasis is laid on poor homes, unsatisfactory school performance, and dissatisfaction with unskilled labour. But although poor family relations are often mentioned, two excellent excerpts from books by David Downes and David Hargreaves point out that the school may not only fail to make up for poor home conditions but may actually be a generator of delinquency.

Stan Cohen's two papers show first, how the reactions of the Press and society to one or two relatively minor occurrences can build up such delinquent syndromes as "Mods and Rockers", and, secondly, the political nature of the definition of vandalism as an emerging social problem.

Although the official statistics on the distribution of delinquency by social class remains largely unquestioned, Anneliese Walker points out succinctly that the main difference between apprehended female delinquents and middle-class girls is often more a difference in the resources at the command of their parents than a difference in actual behaviour. Sheila Yeger's perceptive article on Weekend Junkies highlights the boredom of youth in an industrial town: A depressing picture of an unequal society emerges, for which the education system does little to compensate.

Sports and Pastimes
EVANS, JAMES. *Small-River Fly Fishing for Trout and Grayling*. 207pp. A. and C. Black. £2.25.

James Evans deals chiefly with the fishing of the small but rough streams of the Welsh border where side-casting, flicks and switches are the order of the day compared with casting on the chalk streams of the South, although he finds an affinity with fishing everywhere and points out the increasing dangers of pollution and abstraction. He is opposed to essential wading, and points out that every step which is taken disturbs some link in the river's food chain, especially with the displacement of the algal film which covers the stream's bed. Though essentially practical, this is an important and readable book for all anglers.

Travel and Topography
CLARK, LEONARD. *Sark Discovered*. 93pp plus 20pp of photographs. Dennis Dobson. £1.50.

Sark is increasingly attracting visitors, perhaps not entirely for its own good. Remunerative as tourism is, the

chosen few cannot want to have Heaven crammed. This revised edition of a book first published sixteen years ago should persuade some of its readers to go there, and will help them if they do. Thirty-five brief, romantically written pieces on the island's history, way of life, and most interesting features; over a score of good photographs (four in colour); a section of general information, an extensive bibliography, and a clear map, present the speak on the globe that enchanted Turner, Hugo, and Swinburne. Those who know Sark can avouch that Leonard Clark's enthusiasm is not excessive.

World Affairs
RAHUL, RAM. *Modern Bhutan*. 173pp. Delhi: Vikas. Rs 22.

Readers who are familiar with Ram Rahul's earlier books on the Himalayan Borderland and on the politics of Tibet have learnt to respect the expertise which long study and much travel throughout Central Asia have brought to his handling of such problems as those which confront Bhutan. This book is very different from the sumptuously produced and illustrated work of Blanche Olschaker and the Ganssens which preceded it: in certain respects it is less intimate and more detached. Yet in a remarkable way *Modern Bhutan* supplements *Bhutan: Land of Hidden Treasures*; and those who wish to study the country are strongly advised to begin with the former and then go on to the Olschaker-Ganssens book. For Professor Rahul works from a wider background; he sets Bhutan in its perspective against the Asia of today. He points out that the emergence of Bhutan into the modern world is largely the consequence of Sino-Indian tensions, without which it is doubtful whether the country would have sought and gained admission to the United Nations last September. It would not be easy to find a better introduction to the country, to the people, and to the difficulties which are attending their emergence from an isolation which was both cherished and of long standing.

Books received

Bibliography

HODSON, J. H. *The Administration of Archives*. 217pp. Oxford: Pergamon Press. £5.50.

Written by an experienced archivist, this book deals professionally with the problems of those who are responsible for large collections of documents. It would not have been written a generation or two ago, for the reverence for archives is largely a postwar manifestation and the archivist's a "new" profession. The older records are now fairly secure, modern ones much less so. J. H. Hodson's general survey of the subject is followed by chapters of practical advice on the acquisition of documents and on their arrangement, care and use when acquired. But archivists seldom have unlimited funds and the price of the book does seem rather excessive.

Biography and Memoirs

BOWLEY, AGATHA H. *A Memoir of Professor Sir Arthur Bowley (1869-1957) and his Family*. 86pp. Agatha H. Bowley, Pennington, Grafton, near Petworth, Sussex. £1.25.

At the time of his death in 1957 Sir Arthur Bowley was an Emeritus Professor in the University of London, a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society, and the author of some fifteen books. His daughter's memoir is a record of his life, from Bluscott boy and Cambridge student on to school teaching and lecturing at the London School of Economics and at Reading. It was a Cambridge friendship with the economist Alfred Marshall which started Bowley as an economic statistician, a career in which he was to prove so eminent. Of his achievement in this field, however, Agatha Bowley does not attempt an assessment. The short book, which includes an account of her mother, a talented wood carver, is a work of biographical familiarity with Bowley and his work as a statistician.

TAYLOR, GEOFF. *Return Ticket*. 178pp. Peter Davies. £1.40.

A Lancaster bomber pilot from Australia who was shot down near Hanover in 1943, returned in 1970

with two objectives—to find the spot where his bomber crashed as he and his crew floated down to captivity; and to visit Stalag IVB where they endured the hardships and made attempts to escape until Russians and Americans arrived together at the line of the Elbe. He never found the place of his bomber's last landing; when he arrived at the location of the camp there was not a brick or piece of barbed wire remaining, only fields under crops. This double failure merely heightened recollections of the days that were gone. The fruitless searches afforded an opportunity to study and contrast the two Germanies and to note the relatively unchanged way of life in East Germany. Out of this series of visits come some graphic yet quite unforced accounts of things that happened between 1943 and freedom in 1945. This mixture of memories, frustrations and impressions makes surprisingly absorbing reading.

Classics

SAINT AUGUSTINE. *City of God Against the Pagans*. VII: Books 21-22. Translated by W. M. Green. 461pp. Harvard University Press. London: Heinemann. £1.50.

In these, the last two books of his great treatise, Augustine deals with the punishment of the wicked and the happiness of the righteous after death. He is concerned to stress the unending and awful reality of Hell with its real fires, real worms and gnashing of real teeth, against the metaphorical interpretations of such "tender-hearted Christians" as Origen and his followers. There is a valuable index to all seven volumes of *Scripture Citations, Greek and Roman Authors, Subjects and Proper Names*. W. M. Green and his fellow-translators should be thanked by many for completing this edition of work which, in the words of Ernest Barker, "is an education to read, and a very liberal education".

Education

GOLDSTROM, J. M. *Education, Elementary*. 1780-1900. 167pp. Newton Abbot. David and Charles. £2.50.

J. M. Goldstrom's book is a useful compilation of sources for the history of elementary education, mainly in the nineteenth century. It offers a fascinating variety of documents taken from the original sources, which are well presented and judiciously selected and providing a vivid background to the growth of the public education system. A most helpful and interesting book for students and teachers.

Folk Studies

AUSUBEL, NATHAN (Editor). *A Treasury of Jewish Folklore*. 741pp. Vallentine, Mitchell. £3.50.

The background of biblical studies, history, law and culture is here well set out in the general introduction, and each section has a brief, usually admirable, explanatory preface. The collection itself includes parables, jokes, riddles, folk songs (with music) and passages about the Ten Lost Tribes and the Jews of Abyssinia, the Caucasus, India and China. There are also innumerable tales, some intrinsically Jewish, some gathered from all over Europe and the United States during the centuries of the Dispersion to acquire a Jewish patina as they were handed down.

History

BROGGER, A. W. and SHREINER, HAAKON. *The Viking Ships*. Their Ancestry and Evolution. Oslo: Dreyer. N or 95.

This is a new edition of a classic work published in an English translation by Katherine John in 1951. It is attractively presented and contains extra illustrations in black-and-white and colour as well as a number of drawings illustrative of shipbuilding techniques. The authors, both now dead, were not only learned: they were wise and splendid men, and their views about the possible early stages of development of the Viking ship remain one of the major contributions to the subject. But a good deal has come to light since 1951, and the value of this new edition, whose text is "unaltered and unbridled", would, one thinks, have been increased by an appendix on the Skuldelev finds in particular.

USHERWOOD, STEPHEN. *Britain Century by Century*. 176pp. Newton Abbot: David and Charles. £2.95.

A history book which relies as much on pictures as on the printed word, illustrations which range from Stonehenge and Bronze Age relics to the World War, include reproductions of some historic documents. A striking frontispiece shows an outline of the whole of Britain taken from outer space by an American satellite.

WILLIAMS, ROBERT C. *Culture in Exile*. 404pp. Cornell University Press (IBEC). £6.90.

The Russo-German relationship in modern times has been studied in terms of politics, military strategy, literature but never, it seems, in terms of Russian émigrés in Germany. Robert C. Williams does indeed add a new dimension to the relationship. It is richly coloured and highly val-

Linguistics

McGREGOR, R. S. *Outline of Grammar*. 229pp. Clarendon Press. Oxford University Press. £5.

These two books are very different in scope and aim, but deserve to be noticed together as their appearance is significant of a growing interest in this country in two important linguistic areas. From this point of view, C. S. McGregor's excellent little manual perhaps even more of a sign of the times than R. S. McGregor's far larger and more scholarly work, since it is devoted immediately to the needs of those who require a working knowledge which will enable them to carry out simple conversation and read the code guides the beginner in pronunciation; but he is wisely advised on the guidance of a Punjabi-speaker. The aim of Mr McGregor's ambitious; his book is designed to provide language students who are prepared to devote serious attention to learning a mastery both of written and spoken Hindi. It is based upon photographed lessons which have been used by the author for more than a decade at London and Cambridge, and have stood the test of time. It is the increasing efforts of successive Indian Governments to encourage the use of Hindi in official correspondence, this comprehensive manual is timely as well as useful.

Local History

Sources of Local History. 25p. Library Association.

Revision of this fourth edition of guide was undertaken by the Librarian and staff of the Northamptonshire County Library.

Revised, as before, under the editorship of those of purely local interest and in sum they

and students of local history a good indication of what is in every branch of their sub-

London. *Where They* 104pp. Newton Abbot: David and Charles. £2.95.

WADDE, *Dictionary of Satan*. 351pp. Peter Owen. £3.50.

An extraordinary accumulation of words and phrases set out in alphabetical order has entries for gods and goddesses from Egypt, Greece and Rome (though Medea is omitted); for cults ranging from the mystic and Catholicism to modern Theosophy; and for a variety of characters including Asmodeus, William Blake, Peter Böhmer, Helen Duncan, the Salem witch trials, and William James of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Some spirits like the Breton Kourils are also drawn in. It would be interesting to know why all these are to be connected with Satan.

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